

74216

954.92051

THE HISTORY

571H

MUKTI

VAHINI



74216

954.92051

571H

50/19

◆ Ritu Saraf



RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY
LIBRARY FOUNDATION

उपहार स्वरूप

Gifted by

राजा राममोहन राय पुस्तकालय प्रतिष्ठान

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY
LIBRARY FOUNDATION

BLOCK DD-34 SECTOR-1 SALT LAKE
KOLKATA - 700 064

The History of Mukthivahini

The History of
Muktinath



The History of Mukthivahini

Ritu Saraf

Rini Publication
Allahabad

Preface

The Mukti Bahini is a term which refers to all Bengali resistance that fought against the Pakistan Army during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The Pakistan Army launched military operations against Bengali civilians, students, intelligentsia, and armed personnel after sundown on March 25, 1971. In response, Bangladesh declared independence and Bengali military and paramilitary personnel, as well as civilians, started spontaneous resistance against the aggression. This was the formation of the Mukti Bahini. Later in April, Bangladesh Armed Forces was formed formally with Col. M. A. G. Osmani as the commander-in-chief, Lt. Col. Abdur Rob as the chief-of-staff and Capt. A. K. Khandaker as the deputy chief-of-staff. The armed forces as well as the paramilitary and civilian forces who fought alongside them for the liberation of Bangladesh are referred to as the Mukti Bahini.

The events of the nine-month conflict of the Bangladesh Liberation War are widely viewed as genocide; the Pakistan Army and collaborators targeted Hindu communities, intellectuals and members of the political opposition for attacks. Historians have estimated that, during the conflict, between two hundred thousand and four hundred thousand women and children were raped leading to an estimated 25,000 war babies being born. Estimates of persons

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>v</i>
1. Introduction	9
2. History of Mukti vahini & Majibur Rehman	20
3. Bangladesh Liberation War	26
4. Indo – Pakistani War in 1971	68
5. Military Plans of the Bangladesh Liberation War	111
6. Contribution in Mukthi vahini M. A. G. Osmani	134

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	History of India and Pakistan Relations	2
3	Pakistan's Foreign Policy	3
4	India - Pakistan War in 1971	4
5	Military Expenditure in the Indo-Pakistan War	5
6	Conclusion and Recommendations	6

Introduction

The Mukti Bahini is a term which refers to all Bengali resistance that fought against the Pakistan Army during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The Pakistan Army launched military operations against Bengali civilians, students, intelligentsia, and armed personnel after sundown on March 25, 1971. In response, Bangladesh declared independence and Bengali military and paramilitary personnel, as well as civilians, started spontaneous resistance against the aggression. This was the formation of the Mukti Bahini. Later in April, Bangladesh Armed Forces was formed formally with Col. M. A. G. Osmani as the commander-in-chief, Lt. Col. Abdur Rob as the chief-of-staff and Capt. A. K. Khandaker as the deputy chief-of-staff. The armed forces as well as the paramilitary and civilian forces who fought alongside them for the liberation of Bangladesh are referred to as the Mukti Bahini.

BACKGROUND

Mukti Bahini also termed as the Freedom Fighters collectively refers to the armed organizations that fought against the Pakistan Army during the Bangladesh Liberation War. It was dynamically formed by Bengali regulars and civilians after the proclamation of Bangladesh's independence on March 26, 1971. Subsequently by mid-April 1971, the Bengali officers and soldiers of East Bengal Regiments formed the Bangladesh Armed Forces; and M. A. G. Osmani assumed its command. The civilian groups continued to assist the armed forces during the war. After the war Mukti Bahini became the general term to refer to all forces military and civilian of former East Pakistani origin fighting

against the Pakistani armed forces during the Bangladesh Liberation War. Often Mukti Bahini operated as an effective guerrilla force to keep their enemies on the run.

Although Mukti Bahini was formed to fight off the military crackdown by the Pakistan army on March 25, 1971 during the climax of the Bangladesh freedom movement, The crisis had already started taking shape with anti-Ayub uprising in 1969 and precipitated into a political crisis at the height of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Six-point movement beginning in the 1970s. In March 1971, rising political discontent and cultural nationalism in what was then East Pakistan later, Bangladesh was met by harsh suppressive force from the ruling elite of the West Pakistan establishment in what came to be termed Operation Searchlight. India started actively aiding and re-organising what was by this time already the nucleus of the Mukti Bahini. This led to a crackdown by West Pakistan forces became an important factor in precipitating the civil war as a sea of refugees (estimated at the time to be about 10 million) came flooding to the eastern provinces of India.

The immediate precursor of the Mukti Bahini was Mukti Fauj ("Fauj" is the Urdu originally from, which was preceded denominationally by the sangram parishads formed in the cities and villages by the student and youth leaderships in early March 1971. When and how the Mukti Fauj was created is not clear nor is the later adoption of the name Mukti Bahini. It is, however, certain that the names originated generically refer to the people who fought in the Bangladesh liberation war.

The anti-Ayub uprising in 1969 and during the height of Mujib's six points movement there was a growing movement among the Bengalis in East Pakistan to become independent driven by the nationalists, radicals and leftists. After the election of 1970, the subsequent crisis strengthened that feeling within the people. Sheikh Mujib himself was facing immense pressure from most prominent political quarters, especially the ultra-nationalist young student leaders, to declare independence without delay. Armed preparations were going on by some leftist and nationalist groups, and the Bengali army officers and soldiers were prepared to defect. At the call of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the people of East Pakistan joined in a peaceful movement

for non-cooperation from 3 March 1971, and 7th march and onward, which lasted up to midnight of 25 March 1971. On this date the Pakistani Army cracked down upon unarmed civilians to take control of the administration. During the army crackdown on the night of March 25, 1971, there were reports of small scale resistance notably at Iqbal Hall, Dhaka University and at the Rajarbagh Police Headquarter. The latter initially put a strong fight against the Pakistan Army. As political events gathered momentum, the stage was set for a clash between the Pakistan Army and the Bengali people vowing for independence. Bengali members of the Army were also defecting and gathering in various pockets of the country.

All these early fights were disorganized and futile because of the greater military strength of the Pakistani Army. Outside of Dhaka, resistance was more successful. The earliest move towards forming a liberation army officially came from the declaration of independence made by Major Ziaur Rahman of East Bengal Regiment on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In the declaration made from Kalurghat Betar Kendra (Chittagong) on March 27, 1971, Zia assumed the title of "provisional commander in chief of the Bangladesh Liberation Army", though his area of operation remained confined to Chittagong and Noakhali areas. Major Ziaur Rahman's declaration on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman marked a break with Pakistan by the Bengali units of the army.

Though prolonged Bengali resistance was not anticipated by Pakistani planners of *Operation Searchlight*, when the Pakistani Army cracked down upon the population, the Mukti Bahini were becoming increasingly visible. Headed by Colonel (later, General) M. A. G. Osmani, a retired Pakistani Army officer, this band was raised as Mujib's action arm and security force before assuming the character of a conventional guerrilla force. After the declaration of independence, the Pakistani military sought to quell them, but increasing numbers of Bengali soldiers defected to the underground "Bangladesh army". These Bengali units slowly merged into the Mukti Bahini and bolstered their weaponry.

On April 12, 1971 Colonel M. A. G. Osmani assumed the command of armed forces at Teliapara (Sylhet) headquarters. Osmani was made the commander-in-chief of Bangladesh Armed Forces on April 17,

1971. Serious initiative for organizing the Bangladesh liberation army was taken between 11–17 July.

The regular forces later called Niomita Bahini (regular force) consisted of the members of the EastBengalRegiments (EBR), East Pakistan Rifles (EPR, later BDR), police, other paramilitary forces and the general people who were commanded by the army commanders in the 11 sectors all over Bangladesh. Three major forces: Z-Force under the command of Major (later, Major General) ZiaurRahman, K-Force under Major (later Brigadier) KhaledMosharraf and S-Force under Major (later Major General) KMShafiullah were raised afterwards to fight battles in efficient manners. The irregular forces, generally called Gono Bahini (people's army), were those who were trained more in guerrillawarfare than the conventional one.

The irregular forces, which after initial training joined different sectors, consisted of the students, peasants, workers and political activists. Irregular forces were initiated inside Bangladesh province to adopt guerrilla warfare against the enemy. The regular forces were engaged in fighting the usual way.

The Mukti Bahini obtained strength from the two main streams of fighting elements: members of armed forces of erstwhile EastPakistan and members of the urban and rural youths many of whom were volunteers. Other groups included members of sangram parishads, youth and student wings of AwamiLeague, NAP, Leftist-Communist Parties and radical groups. The Mukti Bahini had several factions. The foremost one was organized by the members of the regular armed force, who were generally known as Freedom Fighters. Then there was Bangladesh Liberation Forces (BLF) led by four youth leaders of the political wing of Sheikh Mujib's Awami League and the third one generally known as Special Guerrilla Forces (SGF) led by the Communist Party of Bangladesh, National Awami Party, and Bangladesh Students Union. They then jointly launched guerrilla operations against the PakistaniArmy causing heavy damages and casualties. This setback prompted the Pakistani Army to induct Razakars, Al-Badrs and Al-Shams ,as well as other Bengalis who opposed independence, and Biharis who had settled during the time of partition. This helped Pakistan stem the tide somewhat as the monsoon approached in the months of June and July.

Bangladesh Navy was constituted in August 1971. Initially, there were two ships and 45 navy personnel. These ships carried out many successful raids on the Pakistani fleet. But both of these ships were mistakenly hit and destroyed by Pakistani fighter planes on 10 December 1971, when they were about to launch a major attack on Mongla seaport.

Bangladesh Air Force started functioning on 28 September at Dimapur in Nagaland, under the command of Air Commodore AK Khondakar. Initially, it consisted of 17 officers, 50 technicians, 2 planes and 1 helicopter. The Air Force carried out more than twelve sorties against Pakistani targets and was quite successful during the initial stages of the Indian attack in early December.

In addition, there were also some independent forces that fought in various regions of Bangladesh and liberated many areas. These included Mujib Bahini which was organized in India. Major General Oban of the Indian Army and Student League leaders Serajul Alam Khan, Sheikh Fazlul Haque Mani, Kazi Arif Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, A. S. M. Abdur Rab, Shahjahan Siraj, Nur E Alam Siddiqi, and Abdul Quddus Makhon were organisers of this Bahini. There was the Kaderia Bahini under Kader Siddique of Tangail, Afsar Bahini and Aftab Bahini of Mymensingh, Tiger Bahini under Abu Siddique Ahmed of Netrakona, Latif Mirza Bahini of Sirajganj, Akbar Hossain Bahini of Jhinaidah, Quddus Molla and Gafur Bahini of Barisal, Hemayet Bahini under Hemayet Uddin of Faridpur. There were also several communist leftist groups who clashed with the Pakistan Army, and controlled some areas independently.

In addition, there were some other groups of freedom fighters which were controlled by the Leftist parties and groups including the NAP and Communist Parties. Among others, Siraj Sikder raised a strong guerrilla force which fought several battles with the Pakistani soldiers in Payarabagan, Barisal. Although there were ideological conflicts among the communist parties on deciding a common action in the context of Bangladesh Liberation, many of the individuals and leaders of Mukti Bahini were deeply influenced by the leftist ideology in general. There were strong concerns among the Indian authority and members of the Awami League led provisional government not to lose the control of the liberation war to the leftists. Nevertheless many leftists overcame

these internal and external difficulties and actively participated in the Liberation war with the main nucleus of the Mukti Bahini.

In August 1947, the Partition of British India gave rise to two new states; the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan, the latter intended to be a homeland for the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent. The Dominion of Pakistan comprised two geographically and culturally separate areas to the east and the west of India. The western zone was popularly (and for a period of time, also officially) termed West Pakistan and the eastern zone (now Bangladesh) was initially termed East Bengal and later, East Pakistan. Although the population of the two zones was close to equal, political power was concentrated in West Pakistan and it was widely perceived that East Pakistan was being exploited economically, leading to many grievances. Administration of two discontinuous territories was also seen as a challenge. On 25 March 1971, rising political discontent and cultural nationalism in East Pakistan was met by brutal suppressive force from the ruling elite of the West Pakistan establishment, in what came to be termed Operation Searchlight.

The events of the nine-month conflict of the Bangladesh Liberation War are widely viewed as genocide; the Pakistan Army and collaborators targeted Hindu communities, intellectuals and members of the political opposition for attacks. Historians have estimated that, during the conflict, between two hundred thousand and four hundred thousand women and children were raped leading to an estimated 25,000 war babies being born. Estimates of persons killed during the conflict range from between 269,000 to one to three million. An estimated ten million refugees entered India, a situation which contributed to its government's decision to intervene militarily in the civil war. Thirty million people were displaced. Susan Brownmiller documented that girls from the age of eight to grandmothers of seventy-five suffered rapes during the war.

INVOLVEMENT IN WAR

Mukti Bahini fought against Pakistan army in various battlegrounds throughout the country and also performed guerrilla operations in different army camps and establishments. Most of them did not have any professional military training nor they had any time for it. They

were trained during the war. Sector commanders directed the guerrilla attacks and also trained the Mukti Bahini. The training camps were mostly situated near border areas with the direct assistance of India.

Formation

The Mukti Bahini consisted of Bengali members of Pakistan armed forces and civilians from East Pakistan, in response to the Operation Searchlight on March 25, 1971, a violent military operation carried out by the Pakistan Army to curb the Bengali nationalist movement through selective genocide of Bengali people.

Mukti Bahini used Guerrilla warfare tactics to fight against the Pakistan Army. India provided economic, military and diplomatic support to the Mukti Bahini, leading West Pakistan to launch Operation Chengiz Khan, a preemptive attack on the western border of India which started the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. The operation also precipitated the 1971 Bangladesh genocide and caused roughly 10 million refugees to flee to India. Essentially Bengali intelligentsia, academics and Hindus were targeted for the harshest treatment, with significant indiscriminate killing taking place. These systematic killings enraged the Bengalis, who declared independence from Pakistan, to achieve the new state of Bangladesh.

Organization

When the Pakistan Army started the military crackdown on the Bengali population, they did not expect a prolonged resistance. But a large number of Bengali members of the East Bengal Regiments (EBR), East Pakistan Rifles (EPR, later BDR, BGB), police, other paramilitary forces, students and other civilians started resistance against the Pakistan Army. With the formation of Bangladesh government on 17 April 1971, Colonel M. A. G. Osmani (later General) was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief of all Bangladesh Forces. The members of EBR, EPR, police and other paramilitary forces were later called "regular force" or "niomito bahini".

During a conference of sector commanders held from 11 to 17 July 1971 held at Kolkata, the forces were further organized and the command was set up with Col. Abdullah as the commander-in-chief (C-in-C) with the status of a cabinet minister, Lt. Col., Mubariz Ali (ex-SSG Commando Pakistan Army) as the Chief of Staff (COS), Group

Captain A K Khandker as the Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS) and Major A R Chowdhury as the Assistant Chief of Staff (ACOS). Bangladesh was divided into eleven sectors. Sector commanders were in charge of conducting guerrilla operations and training fighters. The 10th Sector was under the command of C-in-C Osmany and included the Naval Commandos and C-in-C's special force.

During this conference some major initiatives were taken to organize the Mukti Bahini. This meeting was focused to discuss different problems and future course of action. In this conference Lt. Col. M A Rabb was appointed the Chief-of-staff and Group Captain A K Khandaker was appointed the Deputy Chief-of-staff. The important issues that were discussed during this conference are:

1. Define the boundary of different sectors
2. Organize guerrilla warfare by the following ways:
 - o A group of 5-10 trained fighters would be sent inside Bangladesh with specific instructions
 - o Guerrilla fighters will be classified as:
 - o Guerrilla base: each base would provide food, medicine and accommodation of the guerrilla fighters.
 - o Action group: members of this group would take part in frontal attacks, 50~100% of them would carry arms
 - o Intelligence: members of this group would gather enemy information, they would not take part in frontal attacks, 30% of them would carry arms
3. The regular force would be immediately organized as battalion force and sector troops.
4. Military attacks against the enemy would be carried out by the following ways:
 - o A large number of guerrilla fighters would be sent inside Bangladesh to carry out raid and ambush at every convenient places
 - o Industries would be shut down by disrupting electric supply
 - o Pakistanis would not be allowed to export any raw materials or manufactured goods and the warehouse would be destroyed
 - o The railways and boats used to carry enemy soldiers and enemy military instruments would be destroyed

- o The war strategy should be to force the enemy to disperse
- o After dispersing the enemy the smaller groups would be attacked by the guerrilla fighters

Besides the eleven sectors, the combatants were also divided and reorganized into several groups:

- Regular army battalion Sector troops
- Irregular force or freedom fighters

In addition, some independent forces fought in various regions of Bangladesh. These included the Mujib Bahini, organized by Major General Oban of the Indian Army and Student League leaders Serajul Alam Khan, Sheikh Fazlul Haque Mani, Kazi Arif Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, A. S. M. Abdur Rab, Shahjahan Siraj, Nur E Alam Siddiqi, and Abdul Quddus Makhon and the Kaderia Bahini under Kader Siddique of Tangail. Kaderia Bahini also created a volunteer group to help his Bahini. Some other groups of freedom fighters were controlled by the Leftist parties and groups including the NAP and Communist Parties. A strong guerrilla force led by Siraj Sikder fought several battles with the Pakistani soldiers in Payarabagan, Barisal. Three brigades were created by Ziaur Rahman, Khaled Mosharraf and K M Shafiullah by the name of Z-force, K-force and S-force. A young guerrilla group named "Crack Platoon" did some courageous guerrilla attacks in the Dhaka city that attracted several international media at that time.

Awards given to Mukti Bahini sepoys

The **Bir Sreshtho** (The Most Valiant Hero), is the highest award given to those who show utmost bravery and die in action for their nation. It was awarded to seven Mukti Bahini fighters. They were:

1. Ruhul Amin
2. Mohiuddin Jahangir
3. Mostafa Kamal
4. Hamidur Rahman
5. Munshi Abdur Rouf
6. Nur Mohammad Sheikh
7. Matiur Rahman

The other three gallantry awards are, in decreasing order of importance, Bir Uttom, Bir Bikrom and Bir Protik. All of these awards were introduced immediately after the Liberation War in 1971.

Mukti Bahini appellation of the forces of the WAR OF LIBERATION. The immediate precursor of the Mukti Bahini was Mukti Fauj, which was preceded denominationally by the Sangram Parishads formed in the cities and villages by the student and youth leaderships in early March 1971. When and how the Mukti Fauj was created is not clear nor is the later adoption of the name Mukti Bahini. It is, however, certain that the names originated from the people who joined the liberation struggle. The Mukti Bahini obtained strength from the two main streams of fighting elements: members of armed forces of erstwhile East Pakistan and members of the urban and rural sangram parishads.

On 12 April 1971 Colonel (later General) Mag Osmany assumed the command of armed forces at Teliapara (Sylhet) headquarters. Osmany was made the commander-in-chief of Bangladesh Armed Forces on 17 April 1971. Serious initiative for organising the Bangladesh liberation army was taken between 11 and 17 July. In a meeting of the sector commanders in Calcutta four important resolutions were taken in consideration of strategic aspects of the war, existing problems and future course of resistance. *Regular and irregular forces* The regular forces consisted of the three forces: Z-Force under the command of Major Ziaur Rahman, K-Force under Khaled Mosharraf and S-Force under KM Shafiullah. Most of the soldiers came from East Pakistan Rifles and East Bengal Regiment. Those members of the EPR, Police and Army who could not be accommodated in these battalions were divided into units and sub-units to fight in different sectors. The irregular forces were those who were trained for guerrilla warfare. In addition, there were also some independent forces that fought in various regions of Bangladesh and liberated many areas. These included MUJIB BAHINI, Kaderia Bahini, Afsar Battalion and Hemayet Bahini.

Bangladesh Navy Bangladesh Navy was constituted in August 1971. Initially, there were two ships and 45 navy personnel. These ships carried out many successful raids on the Pakistani fleet. But both of these ships were mistakenly hit and destroyed by the Indian

fighter planes on 10 December 1971, when they were about to launch a major attack on Mongla seaport.

Bangladesh Air Force started functioning on 28 September at Dimapur in Nagaland under the command of Air Commodore AK Khondakar. Initially, it comprised of 17 officers, 50 technicians, 2 planes and 1 helicopter. The Air Force carried out more than twelve sorties against Pakistani targets and were quite successful during the initial stages of the Indian attack in early December.

Mukti Bahini in the final phase The liberation forces started carrying out massive raids into enemy fronts from October 1971. After the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty in August 1971, India began to demonstrate more interest in the Bangladesh war. And finally, India entered the war on 3 December 1971. In fact, the Indian soldiers were already participating in the war in different guises since November when the freedom fighters had launched the Belonia battle. Because of the geo-morphology of Bangladesh, the war could not be won too swiftly. Even then, Dhaka was liberated in a matter of two weeks, the previous successes of the freedom fighters during the preceding few months having been a major contributing factor.

On 16 December 1971, commander of the 14 division of Pakistan army Major General Jamshed surrendered to Indian General Nagra near Mirpur bridge in Dhaka. At 10.40 am, the Indian allied force and Kader Siddiqui entered Dhaka city. That signaled the end of 9-month long War of Liberation of Bangladesh. Stray battles were still waged at various places of the country.

The Commander of Eastern Command of the Pakistan Army Lt General Ameer Abdullah Khan Niazi surrendered to the commander of the joint Indo-Bangladesh force and the chief of Indian eastern command Lt. General Jagjit Singh Aurora. The Bangladesh Forces were represented at the ceremony by Group Captain AK Khondakar.

Mukti Is liberation of the senses from the clutches of the mind. Its general definition is **enlightenment** or a **state of self-realization**. An awakened being like the **Buddha** is someone who has reached mukti. This is often associated, especially in India, with **bakti** or devotion to Guru or God such as **Krishna**.

2

History of Mukti vahini & Majibur Rehman

Almost immediately after the 1971 general elections, a major political-military crisis broke out in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). India was inevitably drawn into the fray, leading to a bloody war between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan had been created around the ideological assumption that because of their faith, the Muslims of India constituted a separate nation. However, religion was not enough to weld together the Punjabi-speaking part of West Pakistan with the Bengali-speaking East Pakistan. The West Pakistani political and economic elite soon acquired a dominant position in Pakistan's army, bureaucracy, economy and polity resulting in economic and political discrimination against East Pakistan. Moreover, in the absence of political democracy, the Bengalis had no mechanism through which to remedy the situation. Consequently, over time, the people of East Pakistan developed a powerful movement for democracy in Pakistan and greater autonomy for East Pakistan. Instead of coming to terms with this movement, the ruling elite of Pakistan decided to suppress it and which ultimately transformed it into a movement for independence from Pakistan.

In December 1970, General Yahya Khan, the military dictator of Pakistan, held free elections in which Bengal's Awami Party under the popular leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman won more than 99 per cent of the seats in East Bengal and an overall majority in Pakistan's National Assembly. But the army and Yahya Khan, backed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the leading politician of West Pakistan, refused to let the

Awami Party form the government. When the latter started a civil disobedience movement to enforce the constitutional provision, in a sudden move on 25 March 1971, Yahya Khan ordered a military crackdown on East Pakistan. Mujibur Rahman was arrested and taken to an unknown destination in West Pakistan.

The West Pakistan army initiated a reign of terror, killing innocent citizens, burning villages and crops. Thousands of intellectuals and Bengali members of the police and army were indiscriminately but systematically eliminated in order to deprive the people of any leadership. For over six months, the army committed rape, torture, arson, brutal killings, and other heinous crimes. Large sections of the East Pakistan police, paramilitary organizations, and East Bengal regiments reacted by revolting. The Awami League leaders, who succeeded in escaping to Calcutta, formed Government of Bangladesh in exile and organized the Mukti Bahini (Liberation army) and launched a fierce underground movement and guerrilla warfare. The brutality of the Pakistan army was specially directed against the Hindus remaining in East Pakistan who were faced with virtual genocide. They were forced to migrate to and seek shelter in West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya in India. By November 1971, the number of refugees from East Bengal had reached ten million.

In India there was a wave of sympathy for the people of East Bengal and a strong demand for swift action against Pakistan. However, the government, though convinced that war with Pakistan was likely, opposed hasty action. She did not want to strengthen Pakistani propaganda that the entire movement for autonomy in East Pakistan and the consequent revolt was not a popular uprising but an Indian conspiracy.

In following a policy of restraint, India had two other major considerations in view. First, if it was to be war, it should come at a time of her choosing. Careful planning and preparations were necessary. Military operations in East Pakistan could not be undertaken during the monsoon when the large number of rivers and rivulets there would be in flood and the marshes impassable. The Himalayan passes would get snowbound only in winter making it impossible for China to intervene and send troops to aid Pakistan. The Mukti Bahini

also needed time to gain enough strength to confront the Pakistani army in regular warfare.

Secondly, the government realized that international opinion had to be educated and won over to the cause of Bangladesh and made aware of India's predicament about the refugees and how they were placing an unbearable burden on India endangering its economic and political stability. For the next eight months, India followed a four-pronged policy. India not only gave sanctuary to the Bangladesh government in exile, but the Indian army gave military training on Indian soil and material aid in money and military equipment to the Mukti Bahini. The Indian government was also generous in providing food, clothing, shelter and medical aid to the refugees in spite of its being a tremendous strain on India's resources. Almost from the outset in April 1971, the Indian armed forces began to prepare for swift military action, though in utmost secrecy, in case a peaceful solution of the refugee problem could not be found.

India's campaign received a very positive response from the media, the intelligentsia, and the students in the West and ultimately from the West European governments besides the people and the governments of the Soviet Union and other European Communist countries. However, the governments of the United States and China adopted an unsympathetic and even hostile attitude towards India. Ignoring Indian protest, the US continued to supply arms to Pakistan. It also tried to pose the problem of Bangladesh primarily as an issue between India and Pakistan rather than one of Bangladesh's independence. China was supportive of Pakistan as it had become virtually its ally. In July-August 1971 Pakistan had helped to bring about a US-China detente.

To secure itself against a possible US-China intervention in case events led to a war, on 9 August India swiftly signed a 20-year Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty provided for immediate mutual consultations and appropriate effective measures in case of either country being subjected to a military threat.

Convinced from the beginning that a war with Pakistan on the Bangladesh issue and the problem of the refugees was inevitable, India was prepared for it by November-end. However, she was reluctant to take action first, even though the Indian army was ready and in fact 4 December had been designated as the day the Indian

armed forces would directly undertake the liberation of Bangladesh. At this stage, Yahya Khan obliged by pushing the button first. On 3 December, Pakistan's air force launched a surprise attack on eight military airfields in western India, hoping to inflict serious damage on the Indian air force and also to internationalize the Bangladesh issue and secure UN intervention. However, he was to fail in both objectives. The Indian air force was relatively unharmed; anticipating a Pakistani attack, the Indian air force had withdrawn beforehand to interior airfields.

India immediately recognized Bangladesh and gave a strong military reply. The Indian strategy was to hold the Pakistani forces in the western sector through strong defensive action, while waging a short, swift and decisive war in the East, forcing the Pakistan army there to surrender before the US, China or the UN could intervene.

Brilliantly led by General J.S. Arora, the Indian army, joined by the Mukti Bahini, virtually ran through East Bengal and reached Dacca, its capital, within eleven days, and surrounded the Pakistani garrison there. Since, in the words of Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, President Nixon was 'not inclined to let the Pakis be defeated,' the US government tried to intervene, declared India to be the aggressor, and stopped all economic aid to it. However, its two resolutions in the UN Security Council proposing a ceasefire and mutual troop withdrawals were vetoed by the Soviet Union, with Britain and France abstaining. The Chinese threat also did not materialize as it confined its intervention to bitter verbal denunciations. More or less in desperation and reminiscent of the gunboat diplomacy of the nineteenth century, on Nixon's orders, segments of the US Seventh Fleet, led by the nuclear aircraft carrier, USS Enterprise, set out for the Bay of Bengal on 9 December with the objective of forcing India to delay the fall of Dacca. However, government calmly ignored the American threat and, instead, asked General Manekshaw, India's Army Chief, to hurry the completion of India's military plan. The Indian armed forces, having surrounded Dacca on 13 December, forced the defeated and demoralized 93,000 strong Pakistan army in Bangladesh, to surrender, on 16 December.

Following the surrender in Dacca, on 17 December, the Indian government announced a unilateral ceasefire on the western front.

Pakistan readily accepted the ceasefire and released Mujibur Rahman, who came to power in Bangladesh on 12 January 1972.

India had several gains to show from the Bangladesh war. The balance of power in South Asia had been altered with India emerging as the pre-eminent power. The grave refugee problem had been solved with the ten million refugees promptly and smoothly sent back to their homes in Bangladesh. The humiliating memory of the defeat in 1962 was wiped out and India's lost pride and self-respect restored. The war had ended, the ceasefire had come—but peace had not. India still held over 90,000 prisoners of war and was in occupation of nearly 9,000 square kilometres of Pakistani territory.

Pakistan was yet to recognize Bangladesh. Summit conference between Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the newly-elected prime minister of Pakistan, was held in Shimla in June 1972 a great deal of hard bargaining took place and the two signed a agreement which came to be known as the Shimla Declaration. India agreed to return the Pakistan territory it had occupied, except some strategy points in Kashmir, mainly in the Kargil sector, which were necessary to safeguard the strategic road link between Srinagar and Leh in Ladakh. In return, Pakistan agreed to respect the existing Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir and undertook not to alter it unilaterally by force or threat of force. The two countries also agreed to settle all their disputes through bilateral negotiations without any outside mediation by the UN or any other power. India also agreed to return the prisoners of war to Pakistan but this was to be contingent upon a Bangladesh-Pakistan agreement. This occurred the next year when Pakistan recognized Bangladesh in August 1973.

Shimla agreement saw India loosing all the advantages it had gained in the war. The hope with which India decided to return the large Pakistani territory it had occupied was unfounded. Pakistan never accepted the Shimla agreement and tried to forcibly alter the LoC when in 1999 May its army regulars dressed as Jehadis attacked various forward Indian posts but were repulsed.

the Indian and RAW funded snakes in media like Hamid Mir have been barking that Pakistan Army committed the genocide of Bengali Muslims in East Pakistan. The Muslims of Bangladesh still believe these lies as all history was written by Indian army and RAW who had taken over all records of history after fall of Dhaka in 1971. Now

after decades, Bengali leaders are coming forwards to expose the lies which have been spread for the last 4 decades. It is time that Muslims of Bangladesh also realize that how Indians and Soviets made a total fool of them and used their leaders to break away from Pakistan. The horrendous atrocities were indeed committed but NOT by Pak army but by the Mukti Bahini, as recorded in Blood and Tears.

The total strength of Pak army was 40,000 in East Pakistan. Total number of prisoners of war were 92,000 which included thousands of Pakistan government officials, civilians, pro-Pakistan citizens and post offices railways and PIA officers and staff. It is NOT humanly possible to commit that levels of genocide as being accused on Pakistan Army. Now even the finest of Bengali leaders are coming forward to expose the lies. Their Zameer is hurting them now. They have betrayed the Ummat-e-Rasul (sm) and now when death is staring them in the face, they want to clean their conscious. Read this and know how the snakes in media and politics lied to you.

3

Bangladesh Liberation War

The **Bangladesh Liberation War** was a revolutionary independence war in South Asia during 1971 which established the republic of Bangladesh. The war pitted East Pakistan (later joined by India) against West Pakistan, and lasted over a duration of nine months. It witnessed large-scale atrocities, the exodus of 10 million refugees and the displacement of 30 million people.

The war broke out on 26 March 1971, when the Pakistani Army launched a military operation called Operation Searchlight against Bengali civilians, students, intelligentsia and armed personnel, who were demanding that the Pakistani military junta accept the results of the 1970 first democratic elections of Pakistan, which were won by an eastern party, or to allow separation between East and West Pakistan. Bengali politicians and army officers announced the declaration of Bangladesh's independence in response to Operation Searchlight. Bengali military, paramilitary and civilians formed the Mukti Bahini, which engaged in guerrilla warfare against Pakistani forces. The Pakistan Army, in collusion with religious extremist militias (the Razakars, Al-Badr and Al-Shams), engaged in the systematic genocide and atrocities of Bengali civilians, particularly nationalists, intellectuals, youth and religious minorities. Bangladesh government-in-exile was set up in the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) in the Indian State of West Bengal.

India entered the war on 3 December 1971, after Pakistan launched pre-emptive air strikes on northern India. Overwhelmed by two war fronts, Pakistani defences soon collapsed. On 16 December, the Allied Forces of Bangladesh and India defeated Pakistan in the east. The

subsequent surrender resulted in the largest number of prisoners-of-war since World War II.

BACKGROUND

In August 1947, the official birth of two states Pakistan and India; gave a permanent home for Hindus and Muslims from the departure of the British. The Dominion of Pakistan comprised two geographically and culturally separate areas to the east and the west with India in between. The western zone was popularly (and for a period of time, also officially) termed West Pakistan and the eastern zone (modern-day Bangladesh) was initially termed East Bengal and later, East Pakistan. Although the population of the two zones was close to equal, political power was concentrated in West Pakistan and it was widely perceived that East Pakistan was being exploited economically, leading to many grievances. Administration of two discontinuous territories was also seen as a challenge. On 25 March 1971, after an election won by an East Pakistani political party (the Awami League) was ignored by the ruling (West Pakistani) establishment, rising political discontent and cultural nationalism in East Pakistan was met by brutal suppressive force from the ruling elite of the West Pakistan establishment, in what came to be termed Operation Searchlight.

The violent crackdown by West Pakistan forces led to Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declaring East Pakistan's independence as the state of Bangladesh on 26 March 1971. Pakistani President Agha Mohammed Yahya ordered the Pakistani military to restore the Pakistani government's authority, beginning the civil war. The war led to a sea of refugees (estimated at the time to be about 10 million) flooding into the eastern provinces of India. Facing a mounting humanitarian and economic crisis, India started actively aiding and organising the Bangladeshi resistance army known as the Mukti Bahini.

Language controversy

In 1948, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's first Governor-General, declared in Dhaka (then usually spelled Dacca in English) that "Urdu, and only Urdu" would be the common language for all of Pakistan. This proved highly controversial, since Urdu was a language that was only spoken in the West by Muhajirs and in the East by Biharis, although the Urdu language had been promoted as the *lingua franca* of Indian

Muslims by political and religious leaders such as Sir Khwaja Salimullah, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk and Maulvi Abdul Haq. The language was considered a vital element of the Islamic culture for Indian Muslims; Hindi and the Devanagari script were seen as fundamentals of Hindu culture. The majority groups in the western wing of the Dominion of Pakistan (provinces, states and tribal areas merged in 1956 as West Pakistan) spoke Punjabi, while the Bengali language was spoken by the vast majority of East Bengalis (from 1956, East Pakistan). The language controversy eventually reached a point where East Bengal revolted while the other part of Pakistan remained calm even though Punjabi was spoken by the majority of the population of the western wing. Several students and civilians lost their lives in a police crackdown on 21 February 1952. The day is revered in Bangladesh and in West Bengal as the Language Martyrs' Day. Later, in memory of the 1952 deaths, UNESCO declared 21 February as the International Mother Language Day in 1999.

In the western wing, the movement was seen as a sectional uprising against Pakistani national interests and the founding ideology of Pakistan, the Two-Nation Theory. West Pakistani politicians considered Urdu a product of Indian Islamic culture, as Ayub Khan said, as late as 1967, "East Pakistanis... still are under considerable Hindu culture and influence." However, the deaths led to bitter feelings among East Bengalis, and they were a major factor in the push for independence in 1971.

Political differences

Although East Pakistan accounted for a slight majority of the country's population, political power remained in the hands of West Pakistanis. Since a straightforward system of representation based on population would have concentrated political power in East Pakistan, the West Pakistani establishment came up with the "One Unit" scheme, where all of West Pakistan was considered one province. This was solely to counterbalance the East wing's votes.

After the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan, Pakistan's first prime minister, in 1951, political power began to devolve to the President of Pakistan, and eventually, the military. The nominal elected chief executive, the Prime Minister, was frequently sacked by the establishment, acting through the President.

The East Pakistanis observed that the West Pakistani establishment would swiftly depose any East Pakistanis elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, such as Khawaja Nazimuddin, Muhammad Ali Bogra, or Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. Their suspicions were further influenced by the military dictatorships of Ayub Khan (27 October 1958 – 25 March 1969) and Yahya Khan (25 March 1969 – 20 December 1971), both West Pakistanis. The situation reached a climax in 1970, when the Awami League, the largest East Pakistani political party, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in the national elections. The party won 167 of the 169 seats allotted to East Pakistan, and thus a majority of the 313 seats in the National Assembly. This gave the Awami League the constitutional right to form a government. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (a Sindhi and former Foreign Minister), the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, refused to allow Rahman to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Instead, he proposed the idea of having two Prime Ministers, one for each wing. The proposal elicited outrage in the east wing, already chafing under the other constitutional innovation, the "one unit scheme". Bhutto also refused to accept Rahman's Six Points. On 3 March 1971, the two leaders of the two wings along with the President General Yahya Khan met in Dhaka to decide the fate of the country. After their discussions yielded no satisfactory results, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called for a nationwide strike. Bhutto feared a civil war, therefore, he sent his trusted companion, Dr. Mubashir Hassan. A message was conveyed and Mujib decided to meet Bhutto. Upon his arrival, Mujib met with Bhutto and both agreed to form a coalition government with Mujib as Premier and Bhutto as President. However, the military was unaware of these developments, and Bhutto increased his pressure on Mujib to reach a decision.

On 7 March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (soon to be the prime minister) delivered a speech at the Racecourse Ground (now called the Suhrawardy Udyan). In this speech he mentioned a further four-point condition to consider at the National Assembly Meeting on 25 March:

- The immediate lifting of martial law.
- Immediate withdrawal of all military personnel to their barracks.
- An inquiry into the loss of life.

- Immediate transfer of power to the elected representative of the people before the assembly meeting 25 March.

He urged his people to turn every house into a fort of resistance. He closed his speech saying, "Our struggle is for our freedom. Our struggle is for our independence." This speech is considered the main event that inspired the nation to fight for its independence. General Tikka Khan was flown into Dhaka to become Governor of East Bengal. East-Pakistani judges, including Justice Siddique, refused to swear him in.

Between 10 and 13 March, Pakistan International Airlines cancelled all their international routes to urgently fly "government passengers" to Dhaka. These "government passengers" were almost all Pakistani soldiers in civilian dress. MV *Swat*, a ship of the Pakistan Navy carrying ammunition and soldiers, was harboured in Chittagong Port, but the Bengali workers and sailors at the port refused to unload the ship. A unit of East Pakistan Rifles refused to obey commands to fire on the Bengali demonstrators, beginning a mutiny among the Bengali soldiers.

Response to the 1970 cyclone

The 1970 Bhola cyclone made landfall on the East Pakistan coastline during the evening of 12 November, around the same time as a local high tide, killing an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 people. Though the exact death toll is not known, it is considered the deadliest tropical cyclone on record. A week after the landfall, President Khan conceded that his government had made "slips" and "mistakes" in its handling of the relief efforts due to a lack of understanding of the magnitude of the disaster.

A statement released by eleven political leaders in East Pakistan ten days after the cyclone hit charged the government with "gross neglect, callous and utter indifference". They also accused the president of playing down the magnitude of the problem in news coverage. On 19 November, students held a march in Dhaka protesting the slowness of the government's response. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani addressed a rally of 50,000 people on 24 November, where he accused the president of inefficiency and demanded his resignation.

As the conflict between East and West Pakistan developed in March, the Dhaka offices of the two government organisations directly involved in relief efforts were closed for at least two weeks, first by

a general strike and then by a ban on government work in East Pakistan by the Awami League. With this increase in tension, foreign personnel were evacuated over fears of violence. Relief work continued in the field, but long-term planning was curtailed. This conflict widened into the Bangladesh Liberation War in December and concluded with the creation of Bangladesh. This was one of the first times that a natural event helped trigger a civil war.

Operation Searchlight

A planned military pacification carried out by the Pakistan Army – codenamed *Operation Searchlight* – started on 25 March to curb the Bengali nationalist movement by taking control of the major cities on 26 March, and then eliminating all opposition, political or military, within one month. Before the beginning of the operation, all foreign journalists were systematically deported from East Pakistan.

The main phase of Operation Searchlight ended with the fall of the last major town in Bengali hands in mid-May. The operation also began the 1971 Bangladesh atrocities. These systematic killings served only to enrage the Bengalis, which ultimately resulted in the secession of East Pakistan later in the same year. The international media and reference books in English have published casualty figures which vary greatly, from 5,000–35,000 in Dhaka, and 200,000–3,000,000 for Bangladesh as a whole, and the atrocities have been referred to as acts of genocide.

According to the *Asia Times*,

At a meeting of the military top brass, Yahya Khan declared: “Kill 3 million of them and the rest will eat out of our hands.” Accordingly, on the night of 25 March, the Pakistani Army launched *Operation Searchlight* to “crush” Bengali resistance in which Bengali members of military services were disarmed and killed, students and the intelligentsia systematically liquidated and able-bodied Bengali males just picked up and gunned down.

Although the violence focused on the provincial capital, Dhaka, it also affected all parts of East Pakistan. Residential halls of the University of Dhaka were particularly targeted. The only Hindu residential hall – Jagannath Hall – was destroyed by the Pakistani armed forces, and an estimated 600 to 700 of its residents were murdered. The Pakistani

army denied any cold blooded killings at the university, though the Hamood-ur-Rehman commission in Pakistan concluded that overwhelming force was used at the university. This fact and the massacre at Jagannath Hall and nearby student dormitories of Dhaka University are corroborated by a videotape secretly filmed by Prof. Nurullah of the East Pakistan Engineering University, whose residence was directly opposite the student dormitories.

The scale of the atrocities was first made clear in the West when Anthony Mascarenhas, a Pakistani journalist who had been sent to the province by the military authorities to write a story favourable to Pakistan's actions, instead fled to the United Kingdom and, on 13 June 1971, published an article in the *Sunday Times* describing the systematic killings by the military. The BBC wrote: "There is little doubt that Mascarenhas' reportage played its part in ending the war. It helped turn world opinion against Pakistan and encouraged India to play a decisive role", with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi herself stating that Mascarenhas' article has led her "to prepare the ground for India's armed intervention".

Hindu areas suffered particularly heavy blows. By midnight, Dhaka was burning, especially the Hindu dominated eastern part of the city. *Time* magazine reported on 2 August 1971, "The Hindus, who account for three-fourths of the refugees and a majority of the dead, have borne the brunt of the Pakistani military hatred."

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested by the Pakistani Army. Yahya Khan appointed Brigadier (later General) Rahimuddin Khan to preside over a special tribunal prosecuting Mujib with multiple charges. The tribunal's sentence was never made public, but Yahya caused the verdict to be held in abeyance in any case. Other Awami League leaders were arrested as well, while a few fled Dhaka to avoid arrest. The Awami League was banned by General Yahya Khan.

Declaration of independence

The violence unleashed by the Pakistani forces on 25 March 1971, proved the last straw to the efforts to negotiate a settlement. Following these outrages, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman signed an official declaration that read:

Today Bangladesh is a sovereign and independent country. On Thursday night, West Pakistani armed forces suddenly attacked the police barracks at Razarbagh and the EPR headquarters at Pilkhana in Dhaka. Many innocent and unarmed have been killed in Dhaka city and other places of Bangladesh. Violent clashes between E.P.R. and Police on the one hand and the armed forces of Pakistan on the other, are going on. The Bengalis are fighting the enemy with great courage for an independent Bangladesh. May Allah aid us in our fight for freedom. Joy Bangla [May Bangladesh be victorious].

Sheikh Mujib also called upon the people to resist the occupation forces through a radio message. Mujib was arrested on the night of 25–26 March 1971 at about 1:30 am (as per Radio Pakistan's news on 29 March 1971).

A telegram containing the text of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's declaration reached some students in Chittagong. The message was translated to Bengali by Dr. Manjula Anwar. The students failed to secure permission from higher authorities to broadcast the message from the nearby Agrabad Station of Radio Pakistan. However, the message was read several times by the independent Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro Radio established by some rebel Bangali Radio workers in Kalurghat. Major Ziaur Rahman was requested to provide security of the station and he also read the Declaration on 27 March 1971. Major Ziaur Rahman broadcast announcement of the declaration of independence on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

This is Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. I, Major Ziaur Rahman, at the direction of Bangobondhu Mujibur Rahman, hereby declare that Independent People's Republic of Bangladesh has been established. At his direction, I have taken the command as the temporary Head of the Republic. In the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I call upon all Bengalees to rise against the attack by the West Pakistani Army. We shall fight to the last to free our motherland. Victory is, by the Grace of Allah, ours. Joy Bangla.

The Kalurghat Radio Station's transmission capability was limited, but the message was picked up by a Japanese ship in Bay of Bengal. It was then re-transmitted by Radio Australia and later by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

M A Hannan, an Awami League leader from Chittagong, is said to have made the first announcement of the declaration of independence over the radio on 26 March 1971. There is controversy now as to when Major Zia gave his speech. BNP sources maintain that it was 26 March, and there was no message regarding declaration of independence from Mujibur Rahman. Pakistani sources, like Maj. Gen. Fazal Muqeem Khan in his book "PAKISTAN'S CRISIS IN LEADERSHIP" Brigadier Zahir Alam Khan in his book "THE WAY IT WAS" and Lt. Gen. Kamal Matinuddin in his book "TRAGEDY OF ERRORS: EAST PAKISTAN CRISIS, 1968-1971" had written that they heard Major Zia's speech on 26 March 1971 but Maj. Gen. Hakeem A. Qureshi in his book "THE 1971 INDO-PAK WAR: A SOLDIER'S NARRATIVE" (Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2002), gives the date of Major Zia's speech as 27 March 1971.

26 March 1971 is considered the official Independence Day of Bangladesh, and the name Bangladesh was in effect henceforth. In July 1971, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi openly referred to the former East Pakistan as Bangladesh. Some Pakistani and Indian officials continued to use the name "East Pakistan" until 16 December 1971.

LIBERATION WAR

March-June

At first, resistance was spontaneous and disorganised, and was not expected to be prolonged. However, when the Pakistani Army cracked down upon the population, resistance grew. The Mukti Bahini became increasingly active. The Pakistani military sought to quell them, but increasing numbers of Bengali soldiers defected to the underground "Bangladesh army". These Bengali units slowly merged into the Mukti Bahini and bolstered their weaponry with supplies from India. Pakistan responded by airlifting in two infantry divisions and reorganising their forces. They also raised paramilitary forces of Razakars, Al-Badr and Al-Shams (who were mostly members of the Muslim League, Awami league and other Islamist groups), as well as other Bengalis who opposed independence, and Bihari Muslims who had settled during the time of partition.

On 17 April 1971, a provisional government was formed in Meherpur district in western Bangladesh bordering India with Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman, who was in prison in Pakistan, as President, Syed Nazrul Islam as Acting President, Tajuddin Ahmed as Prime Minister, and General Muhammad Ataul Ghani Osmani as Commander-in-Chief, Bangladesh Forces. As fighting grew between the occupation army and the Bengali Mukti Bahini, an estimated 10 million Bengalis, sought refuge in the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal

June–September

Bangladesh forces command was set up on 11 July, with Col. M. A. G. Osmani as commander-in-chief (C-in-C) with the status of Cabinet Minister, Lt. Col., Abdur Rabb as chief of Staff (COS), Group Captain A K Khandker as Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS) and Major A R Chowdhury as Assistant Chief of Staff (ACOS).

General Osmani had differences of opinion with the Indian leadership regarding the role of the Mukti Bahini in the conflict. Indian leadership initially envisioned Bengali forces to be trained into a small elite guerrilla force of 8,000 members, led by the surviving East Bengal Regiment soldiers operating in small cells around Bangladesh to facilitate the eventual Indian intervention, but the Bangladesh Government in exile and General Osmani favoured the following strategy:

- Bengali conventional force would occupy lodgment areas inside Bangladesh and then Bangladesh government would request international diplomatic recognition and intervention. Initially Mymensingh was picked for this operation, but Gen. Osmani later settled on Sylhet.
- Sending the maximum number to guerrillas inside Bangladesh as soon as possible with the following objectives:
 - o Increasing Pakistani casualties through raids and ambush.
 - o Cripple economic activity by hitting power stations, railway lines, storage depots and communication networks.
 - o Destroy Pakistan army mobility by blowing up bridges/culverts, fuel depots, trains and river crafts.
 - o The strategic objective was to make the Pakistanis spread their forces inside the province, so attacks could be made on isolated Pakistani detachments.

Bangladesh was divided into eleven sectors in July, each with a commander chosen from defected officers of the Pakistani army who joined the Mukti Bahini to conduct guerrilla operations and train fighters. Most of their training camps were situated near the border area and were operated with assistance from India. The 10th Sector was directly placed under the Commander in Chief (C-in-C) General M. A. G. Osmani and included the Naval Commandos and C-in-C's special force. Three brigades (11 Battalions) were raised for conventional warfare; a large guerrilla force (estimated at 100,000) was trained.

Three brigades (8 infantry battalions and 3 artillery batteries) were put into action between July – September. During June – July, Mukti Bahini had regrouped across the border with Indian aid through Operation Jackpot and began sending 2000 – 5000 guerrillas across the border, the so-called Moonsoon Offensive, which for various reasons (lack of proper training, supply shortage, lack of a proper support network inside Bangladesh etc.) failed to achieve its objectives. Bengali regular forces also attacked BOPs in Mymensingh, Comilla and Sylhet, but the results were mixed. Pakistani authorities concluded that they had successfully contained the Monsoon Offensive, which proved a near-accurate observation.

Guerrilla operations, which slackened during the training phase, picked up after August. Economic and military targets in Dhaka were attacked. The major success story was Operation Jackpot, in which naval commandos mined and blew up berthed ships in Chittagong, Mongla, Narayanganj and Chandpur on 15 August 1971.

October–December

See also: Mitro Bahini Order of Battle December 1971, Pakistan Army Order of Battle December 1971, Evolution of Pakistan Eastern Command plan and Operation Jackpot Bangladesh conventional forces attacked border outposts. Kamalpur, Belonia and the Battle of Boyra are a few examples. 90 out of 370 BOPs fell to Bengali forces. Guerrilla attacks intensified, as did Pakistani and Razakar reprisals on civilian populations. Pakistani forces were reinforced by eight battalions from West Pakistan. The Bangladeshi independence fighters even managed to temporarily capture airstrips at Lalmonirhat and Shalutikar. Both of these were used for flying in supplies and arms from India. Pakistan sent another 5 battalions from West Pakistan as reinforcements.

INDIAN INVOLVEMENT

Wary of the growing involvement of India, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) launched a pre-emptive strike on Indian Air Force bases on 3 December 1971. The attack was modelled on the Israeli Air Force's Operation Focus during the Six-Day War, and intended to neutralise the Indian Air Force planes on the ground. The strike was seen by India as an open act of unprovoked aggression. This marked the official start of the Indo-Pakistani War.

As a response to the attack, both India and Pakistan formally acknowledged the "existence of a state of war between the two countries", even though neither government had formally issued a declaration of war.

Three Indian corps were involved in the liberation of East Pakistan. They were supported by nearly three brigades of Mukti Bahini fighting alongside them, and many more fighting irregularly. This was far superior to the Pakistani army of three divisions. The Indians quickly overran the country, selectively engaging or bypassing heavily defended strongholds. Pakistani forces were unable to effectively counter the Indian attack, as they had been deployed in small units around the border to counter guerrilla attacks by the Mukti Bahini. Unable to defend Dhaka, the Pakistanis surrendered on 16 December 1971.

The air and naval war

The Indian Air Force carried out several sorties against Pakistan, and within a week, IAF aircraft dominated the skies of East Pakistan. It achieved near-total air supremacy by the end of the first week as the entire Pakistani air contingent in the east, PAF No.14 Squadron, was grounded because of Indian and Bangladesh airstrikes at Tejgaon, Kurmitolla, Lal Munir Hat and Shamsher Nagar. Sea Hawks from INS Vikrant also struck Chittagong, Barisal and Cox's Bazar, destroying the eastern wing of the Pakistan Navy and effectively blockading the East Pakistan ports, thereby cutting off any escape routes for the stranded Pakistani soldiers. The nascent Bangladesh Navy (comprising officers and sailors who defected from the Pakistani Navy) aided the Indians in the marine warfare, carrying out attacks, most notably Operation Jackpot.

Surrender and aftermath

On 16 December 1971, Lt. Gen A. A. K. Niazi, CO of Pakistan Army forces located in East Pakistan signed the Instrument of Surrender. At the time of surrender only a few countries had provided diplomatic recognition to the new nation. Over 93,000 Pakistani troops surrendered to the Indian forces & Bangladesh Liberation forces, making it the largest surrender since World War II. Bangladesh sought admission in the UN with most voting in its favour, but China vetoed this as Pakistan was its key ally. The United States, also a key ally of Pakistan, was one of the last nations to accord Bangladesh recognition. To ensure a smooth transition, in 1972 the Simla Agreement was signed between India and Pakistan. The treaty ensured that Pakistan recognised the independence of Bangladesh in exchange for the return of the Pakistani PoWs. India treated all the PoWs in strict accordance with the Geneva Convention, rule 1925. It released more than 93,000 Pakistani PoWs in five months. Further, as a gesture of goodwill, nearly 200 soldiers who were sought for war crimes by Bengalis were also pardoned by India. The accord also gave back more than 13,000 km (5,019 sq mi) of land that Indian troops had seized in West Pakistan during the war, though India retained a few strategic areas; most notably Kargil (which would in turn again be the focal point for a war between the two nations in 1999). This was done as a measure of promoting "lasting peace" and was acknowledged by many observers as a sign of maturity by India. However, some in India felt that the treaty had been too lenient to Bhutto, who had pleaded for leniency, arguing that the fragile democracy in Pakistan would crumble if the accord was perceived as being overly harsh by Pakistanis.

Reaction in West Pakistan to the war

Reaction to the defeat and dismemberment of half the nation was a shocking loss to top military and civilians alike. No one had expected that they would lose the formal war in under a fortnight, and there was also unsettlement over what was perceived as a meek surrender of the army in East Pakistan. Yahya Khan's dictatorship collapsed and gave way to Bhutto, who took the opportunity to rise to power. General Niazi, who surrendered along with 93,000 troops, was viewed with suspicion and contempt upon his return to Pakistan. He was shunned

and branded a traitor. The war also exposed the shortcomings of Pakistan's declared strategic doctrine that the "defence of East Pakistan lay in West Pakistan". Pakistan also failed to gather international support, and found itself fighting a lone battle with only the USA providing any external help. This further embittered the Pakistanis, who had faced the worst military defeat of an army in decades. The debacle immediately prompted an enquiry headed by Justice Hamoodur Rahman.

Foreign reaction

United Nations

Though the United Nations condemned the human rights violations during and following Operation Searchlight, it failed to defuse the situation politically before the start of the war. Following Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's declaration of independence in March 1971, India undertook a world-wide campaign to drum up political, democratic and humanitarian support for the people of Bangladesh for their liberation struggle. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi toured a large number of countries in a bid to create awareness of the Pakistani atrocities against Bengalis. This effort was to prove vital later during the war, in framing the world's context of the war and to justify military action by India. Also, following Pakistan's defeat, it ensured prompt recognition of the newly independent state of Bangladesh.

Following India's entry into the war, Pakistan, fearing certain defeat, made urgent appeals to the United Nations to intervene and force India to agree to a cease fire. The UN Security Council assembled on 4 December 1971 to discuss the hostilities in South Asia. After lengthy discussions on 7 December, the United States made a resolution for "immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of troops". While supported by the majority, the USSR vetoed the resolution twice. In light of the Pakistani atrocities against Bengalis, the United Kingdom and France abstained on the resolution.

On 12 December, with Pakistan facing imminent defeat, the United States requested that the Security Council be reconvened. Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was rushed to New York City to make the case for a resolution on the cease fire. The council continued deliberations for four days. By the

time proposals were finalised, Pakistan's forces in the East had surrendered and the war had ended, making the measures merely academic. Bhutto, frustrated by the failure of the resolution and the inaction of the United Nations, ripped up his speech and left the council. Most UN member nations were quick to recognise Bangladesh within months of its independence.

Bhutan

As the Bangladesh Liberation War approached the defeat of the Pakistan Army, Bhutan became the second country in the world (after India) to recognize the newly independent state on 6 December 1971. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first President of Bangladesh visited Bhutan to attend the coronation of Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth King of Bhutan in June, 1974.

Sectors in Bangladesh Liberation War

During the Bangladesh Liberation War the Bangladesh Forces, military component of the Mukti Bahini, were divided within the geographical area of Bangladesh into eleven sectors. Each had a sector commander who directed the military operation, which was carried out by several sub-sector commanders and their troops along with civilian resistance fighters.

BANGLADESH SECTOR COMMANDERS CONFERENCE

The history of the Bangladesh liberation war dates back to April 1971 when it began its inception with the title of Bangladesh Forces during the first Bangladesh Sector Commanders Conference held in the week of July 11–17, 1971. It was at this conference during which time BD Forces was organized and formed for the independence struggle. It was significant in the light of its official creation and formation as Bangladesh Forces, its command structuring, sector reorganization, reinforcement and appointing war commanders was its principle focus.

This conference was presided over by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Tajuddin Ahmed, and General M.A.G. Osmani, during which General Muhammad Ataul Gani Osmani received his promotion from Colonel and was reinstated from retirement to active duty into the Armed Forces of Bangladesh as its senior most official. General

M.A.G. Osmani had thereby been appointed Commander in Chief of all Bangladesh Forces and Group Captain Abdul Karim Khandker,psa appointed as Deputy Chief of Command of all Bangladesh Forces . Principal participants of this conference was Squadron Leader M. Hamidullah Khan, Major Ziaur Rahman, Wing Commander M Khademul Bashar, Major M. A. Jalil, Captain Haider, Lt. Col. Abdur Rab.

Structure

The Bangladesh Forces was organized for the war in 1971 into three brigades in 11 sectors, with BDF HQ situated at 8 Theatre Road, Calcutta, West Bengal. Bangladesh interim government of July 11, 1971 appointed Col. M A G Osmani as Commander in Chief. Lt.Col Rab was appointed as Chief of Bangladesh Army Staff. In this meeting, Bangladesh was divided into Eleven Sectors under Sector Commanders.

Sector Commanders directed the guerrilla warfare. For better efficiency in military operations each of the sectors were divided into a number of sub-sectors. On November 21, 1971 Bangladesh Forces under Indian Army formed an allied command in which India took surrender of Pakistani forces on December 16, 1971. The table below provides a list of the sectors along with the area under each of them, the names of the sector commanders and the names of sub-sectors.

The 10th Sector was directly placed under Commander in Chief and included the Naval Commandos and C-in-C's special force. These commandos were later absorbed into the Bangladesh Navy. Sector Commanders directed the guerrilla warfare against West Pakistani forces. For better efficiency in military operations each of the sectors were divided into a number of sub-sectors.

Indian participation

The Bangladesh Forces received assistance from the Indian authorities soon after hostilities started. On November 21, 1971, when the natural climate was more adaptable and by which time all Bangladesh Forces had severely under-cut the strength of the West Pakistani Forces, a demand of the Government of India was conceded to by the Bangladesh Government-in-exile in Calcutta, India, which was handing over the full command and authority of its operations to the Indian armed forces to command the war. The Indian Army entered

Bangla Desh through air and land. The Pakistani force already morally broken and militarily devastated by the BD Forces, agreed to a cease fire without defiance in about one and a half weeks, on December 16, 1971. Deputy Chief of Command Group Captain Abdul Karim Khandker,psa has taken part as a representative of Bangladesh Government and freedom Fighter group.

The cease fire was switched to a surrender by the Indian government which the Commanding General of the Pakistan Army Eastern Command signed. Victory was declared by the Indian authorities and all prisoners of war including combat material were taken to India, with the Indian army remaining inside independent Bangladesh another three months until mid-March 1972. Bangladesh Forces were ordered for demobilization on January 29 under the direction of General M.A.G Osmani in final Sector Commanders Conference at the old Police HQ at Mintu Road, Dhaka, effective 14 February 1972.

Battle of Garibpur

The **Battle of Garibpur** was fought between Pakistan and Mukti Bahini on 20–21 November 1971. The Indian Armed Forces joined the Mukti Bahini on 3 December 1971, creating the alliance named Mitro Bahini. The battle was a part of Bangladesh liberation war.

An intimately entangled part of this battle is the air battle over the Boyra Salient, the actual Battle of Boyra where the Mitro Bahini successfully engaged and destroyed strike elements of the Pakistan Air Force. The battle took place prior to the start of hostilities in the western front of India (known as Indo-Pakistani War of 1971). The Mitro Bahini defeated Pakistan Army in the battle thus capturing key areas and severely denting Pakistani morale.

Background

After months of internal tensions in East Pakistan (current day Bangladesh) and a clampdown on Bengali nationalists, many independence fighters had organised themselves into a guerilla army. Called the Mukti Bahini, these rebels were aided by India in their struggle. After initial success over Pakistani troops there had been some relative calm in the region and further Indian assistance was

sought to turn the tide. India thus started to involve itself deeper into the conflict brewing in the east and stationed its troops near the border.

The Boyra salient located inside the North West part of East Pakistan consisting of Garibpur village was at an important crossroads for both nations. Its control was thus vital as it included a highway to Jessore from India.

The battle

On 21 November, the 14 Punjab Battalion - supported by a squadron of 14 PT-76 tanks from 45 Cavalry moved in to capture the areas around Garibpur inside Pakistani territory. The move was supposed to be a surprise, but following a skirmish with patrol troops of both armies the previous day, Pakistan was alerted to this impending attack. Pakistan immediately responded in numbers when its 107 Infantry Brigade - supported by 3rd Independent Armoured Squadron, equipped with M24 Chaffee light tanks was launched. Possessing numerical superiority, Pakistan troops were in position to decimate the Indian intrusion. But the Punjab Battalion, known for its long history of valor, dug in and poised themselves for a counterattack. Retaining the Infantry and the Recoilless rifles in a defensive position, the tanks were sent forward to ambush the oncoming Pakistani charge. In the next couple of hours Indian troops pounded the Pakistani attack who couldn't pinpoint the source of attacks due to poor visibility on account of fog. Undeterred, Pakistan tanks and infantry were thrown into an offensive against Indian defensive positions. But once again these were repulsed by the Indians and resulted in heavy casualties for Pakistan. By noon more than 11 tanks lay smouldering with a further 3 captured in working condition whilst losing six of the PT-76 tanks. The 107 Brigade too had been severely battered with most of its original strength depleted while Indians reported casualties of 40.

But the final chapter of the battle was yet to be written. Pakistan Army had called for help from the Pakistan Air Force which soon responded with attacks on Indian positions. At around 3:00 p.m. three F-86 Sabres of the PAF flew in to provide close air support and hit the Indian positions using machine guns and rocket fire. The Indian Air Force however was prepared for such an attack and was thrust to neutralise the threat from the skies. Flying in their Gnats the four pilots were soon engaged in a dog fight against their Pakistani

counterparts. In the first engagement of the two air powers in six years, all the three Sabres were downed in minutes. Two of the pilots ejected safely but were captured by the Mukti Bahini and taken to India as POWs.

Aftermath

The battle coming just weeks before the official start of the war had an unexpected turn of events. Even the allied forces comprising Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army had only dreamt of such a victory given the overwhelming odds they were up against in this battle. A single battalion had been able to destroy an entire brigade supported by an air force and artillery. This and victories in other battles nearby like Battle of Hilli ensured that the Northern sector of East Pakistan was virtually in the hands of Mukti Bahini (Allied forces) before the war was declared. The morale of the Pakistanis dipped and following the mass defections of Bengalis, it was only a matter of time before they would face ultimate defeat. Interestingly one of the captured PAF pilots, Parvez Mehdi Qureshi later on became the Chief of Air Staff of the Pakistan Air Force.

MILITARY HISTORY OF BANGLADESH

The **military history of Bangladesh** begins with the 1971 liberation war that led to the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan. The Military of Bangladesh inherits much of its organisation and structure from the Military of British India and from 1947, the Pakistani Armed Forces and its composition was significantly altered with the absorption of the Mukti Bahini guerrilla forces following independence.

Background

The military history of the region covers the rule of the Sena dynasty and Mughal dynasty. The current armed forces were raised from the armed forces of British India, which included the Bengal Regiment and major installations such as the Dhaka Cantonment, Savar Cantonment and the Bogra Cantonment. With the partition of India on August 15, 1947 the territory constituting modern Bangladesh was partitioned from the province of Bengal as East Bengal, joining the newly created state of Pakistan. Ethnic and sectional discrimination hampered the role and function of the Pakistani military. Bengalis

were under-represented in the Pakistan military. Officers of Bengali origin in the different wings of the armed forces made up just 5% of overall force by 1965. West Pakistanis believed that Bengalis were not “martially inclined” unlike Pashtuns and Punjabis; the “martial races” notion was dismissed as ridiculous and humiliating by Bengalis. Moreover, despite huge defence spending, East Pakistan received none of the benefits, such as contracts, purchasing and military support jobs. The Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 over Kashmir also highlighted the sense of military insecurity among Bengalis as only an under-strength infantry division and 15 combat aircraft without tank support were in East Pakistan to thwart any Indian retaliations during the conflict.

Watershed in the History of Bangladesh

the history of the South Asia as a black day on which five patriotic officers of the Army who saved Bangladesh from becoming the colony of India 35 years ago, were hanged. It was not surprising because the Prime Minister of Bangladesh – Hasina Wazed – is the daughter of the traitor – Sheikh Mujib – who was the President of the country against who the 15 August 1975 coup d’etat was carried out. It was vendetta, not justice; its shadow will loom large over the country until the legacy of the traitor is disowned and discredited in Bangladesh. It took Sheikh Hasina 35 years to discredit the heroism of the best sons of the soil as mere murders. It will not take that long to discredit Hasina – the lap dog of India - who has since become so bolds as to wear her father’s treachery as a badge of honour. It would not be long before Sheikh Mujib is seen as the worst traitor in the sub-continent since Mir Jaffer.

Bangladesh is the product of conspiracy and war in which India played the major part. India deserves credit for being able to recruit popular Muslim leaders of Bengal to betray their fellow Muslims to advance the objectives of India. Sheikh Mujib was a student leader active in the Pakistan Movement and he could have become the Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1971 when he emerged as the leader of the Party with the largest number of seats in the parliament. He met President Yahya Khan and accepted his invitation in March 1971 to form the next government. But only a few days later he conveyed regret to Yahya Khan after his Indian agent handler came back from New Delhi and informed him that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had agreed to invade East Pakistan in support of his Unilateral Declaration

of Independence (UDI). Sheikh Mujib betrayed his constituency, refused to take office as the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and followed the direction of his handlers from India. That truth has since been revealed in several books published in India and now his daughter – Prime Minister Hasina Wazed – has admitted that her father was a traitor (following story). The irony is that the politicians in Pakistan continue to sell the Indian propaganda that secession of East Pakistan was the ‘inevitable consequence of maltreatment’. What maltreatment? No one bother to ascertain or detail.

The senior most officer executed – Colonel Syed Farook Rehman – was like a son to me. I met him in Libya where he along with other officers who took part in the coup d’etat of 15 August 1975, had been given political asylum. A relationship of warmth and trust developed between me and Colonel Farook. He is the most fearless person that I came across in my life. The only person to benefit from his courage and fearlessness was the President of the country – General Ershad. He recognised the honourable role those young officers had played in loosening the shackles in which India held their country – Bangladesh. He allowed them to return to Bangladesh, whereupon they founded a new political party- Freedom Party. Colonel Farook contested presidential elections against General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, and secured respectable fifth of the votes cast. It was only after Mujib’s daughter – who had lived in exile in India for a long time – returned to Bangladesh; took the reins of her father’s party – the Awami League – into her hands and won the elections with the guidance and financial help of India in 1996. She had been campaigning on a platform to avenge the murder of her father. Most of those who had participated in the coup d’etat in 1975 left the country. However, the five (Colonel Farook, Lt Col Sultan Shahayar Khan, Lt Col. Mohyuddin Ahmed, Major Badrul Huda and Major AKM Mohyuddin) who were hanged on January 27, put faith in ‘indemnity’ provided by constitutional amendment. They were clearly wrong to have trusted the ‘judiciary’ to uphold that their action had been motivated by ‘high purpose’ and not ‘personal benefit’.

I feel sad that they were unable to articulate the ‘high purpose’ that motivated the action they took on 15 August 1975. It has since been clearly established that Sheikh Mujib acted under the guidance of and in collaboration with the enemy – India – to dismember his

country. To remove a traitor – an Indian agent - from power is indeed ‘high purpose’. Now Prime Minister Hasina Wazed has admitted that her father was a traitor who worked with and for the enemy – India. It took her 35 years to so tire the people with rhetoric and propaganda and so undermine the institutions of the state that she could get away with murder. The execution of the five patriots on January 27 this year was indeed murder. The parliament reversed the ‘indemnity’ and a ‘special court’ passed the death sentences during her first term as Prime Minister. But she could not get high judiciary to bend to her will and reject their appeal. The military was also not willing to endorse their execution. Hasina had to wait until the Peelkhana mutiny and massacre by BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) of 25-26 February 2009, to terrify the people as well as the judicial and the military establishment to an extent that the ‘feared outrage’ that had prevented her from sending the five military officers to the gallows did not materialise.

Following the victory of the Awami League in the 1970 elections, then-president Gen. Yahya Khan refused to appoint its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as prime minister and launched *Operation Searchlight*, using the Pakistani army to repress political activity and kill intellectuals and Hindus. Figures of people killed by Pakistani forces vary from a minimum of around 200,000 to a maximum of around 3 million. Responding to Mujib’s call for rebellion, many Bengali officers and units mutinied against their West Pakistani counterparts and raised the Mukti Bahini, a guerrilla force under the leadership of Gen. Muhammad Ataul Gani Osmani with active support and supplies from India. While the war raged on, the Bangladesh Navy was constituted in August 1971. Two ships and 45 navy personnel originally made up the force; they attacked Pakistani naval vessels. The Bangladesh Air Force started up on 28 September at Dimapur in Nagaland, under Air Commodore A. K. Khandker’s command. While consisting of only a handful planes and one helicopter, the Air Force carried out 12 sorties against Pakistani targets.

Operation Jackpot in Bangladesh Liberation War

Operation Jackpot was the codename for several military operations during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Indian Army Eastern Command initiated the original “Operation Jackpot”, an

integrated logistical and training operation for the Mukti Bahini on May 15, 1971

Operation Jackpot also refers to the simultaneous attacks of Bengali naval commandos as part of Mukti Bahini on 15 August during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. The commando operation that sabotaged Pakistan Navy and her assets in Chittagong, Chandpur, Mongla and Naryanganj on August 15 is known as "Operation Jackpot". It was the first major involvement of Naval Special Service Group, under Commodore David Felix, in the conflict and actively participated in the conflict. Ironically, SSG(N) also led their counter-operations under the same codename.

The Operational plan of Lt. General Sagat Singh commanding the Indian Army IV corps against Pakistani 14th and 39th Divisions and the 97th Independent Infantry Brigade positioned in Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong Districts during December 3 - December 16 was also called **Operation Jackpot**

Background

After the Pakistan Army launched Operation Searchlight in March 1971 in a bid to curb all resistance (political and otherwise), the Indian government decided to open the borders to admit millions of Bengali refugees and the Bengali resistance forces aided by the Awami League. By mid-May, Pakistan Army had occupied all major towns in Bangladesh and had driven the battered remnants of the Mukti Bahini across the border into India, forcing the Mukti Bahini to switch to guerrilla warfare under the training and guidance of the Indian Army. The Indian BSF (Border Security Force) had given supplies locally to the Mukti Bahini since March, and had even made some incursions across the border into East Pakistan, but these efforts had been disorganized, uncoordinated and inadequate to meet the needs of the Mukti Bahini. Once the Indian army completely took over aiding the Mukti Bahini, they decided to launch a fully fledged integrated operation, codenamed *Operation Jackpot*. The Indian Military Intelligence also recognize the operational abilities of Pakistan's Naval Special Service Group that had conducted the Operation Barisal, which resulted in an ultimate success. Prior to launch of this operation, the Pakistan's Eastern Naval Command was well established by its Officer Commanding Rear-Admiral Mohammad Shariff. The main objective

of this operation was to sever the maritime communications between East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

The Operational Setup

On May 15, the Indian Army took over the task of aiding the Mukti Bahini, setting up a coordinated enterprise under the Eastern Command for meeting the logistical and training needs and, to some extent, lend operational support and planning advice. The operation was codenamed "Operation Jackpot". The operation was initially commanded by Maj. Gen. Onkar Singh Kalkat and after 2 months operational command was assumed by Maj. Gen. B. N. 'Jimmy' Sarcar. The border areas around Bangladesh was divided into 6 logistical sectors, each to be commanded by a Brigadier from the Indian army.

The Indian logistical sectors for this operation were:

- Alpha
- Bravo
- Charlie
- Delta
- Echo
- Foxtrot,

Through this network, Mukti Bahini forces communicated with the Mukti Bahini Headquarters Exiled in Kolkata and coordinated all supply, training and operational efforts for the war. Lt. Gen. J. S. Aurora, commander of Eastern Command, was overseeing the entire operation.

EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPORTANCE

Operation Jackpot proved to be a significant one, since it for the first time debunked Pakistan's claims of stability in East Pakistan. The operation received extensive attention from the international media and helped to generate worldwide publicity for the liberation war.

Despite the limitations and challenges rising from the state of the Indian transport system (training camps were located inside India), remoteness of the guerrilla bases, unavailability and inadequacy of proper supplies, and the decision of Bangladesh High Command to put the maximum number of guerrillas into battle in the minimum time possible (often after 4 to 6 weeks of training, sometimes resulting

in only 50% of the personnel receiving firearms initially), the operation was effective enough to support the 30,000 regular soldiers (8 infantry battalions, and sector troops) and 100,000 guerrillas that Bangladesh eventually fielded in 1971, and help run a Mukti Bahini campaign that destroyed or damaged at least 231 bridges, 122 railway lines and 90 power stations, while killing 237 officers, 136 JCOs/NCOs and 3,559 soldiers, of the Pakistan army and an unspecified number of EPCAF and police and an estimated 5,000 Razakar personnel during the period of April–November 1971. Some of the Mukti Bahini efforts also demoralized the Pakistani Army to the extent that, by November, they left their bases only if the need arose. The contribution of the Mukti Bahini to the eventual defeat of Pakistan was enormous.

Bangladesh naval commando operation (August 15, 1971)

Bangladesh is crisscrossed by hundreds of rivers in addition to 300 large navigable canals. The river transport is important because of the poor state of the road network, especially during the Monsoon, when the whole country turns into a morass of mud and many areas are only reachable only through water transport. The movement and logistics of Pakistan army largely depended on their control of the inland waterways, and of the Sea ports.

Pakistan Naval Preparations

The importance waterways were not lost to Pakistan Eastern Command. After the launch of Operation Searchlight and the successful conclusion of Operation Barisal, General A. O. Mittha (Quarter Master General of Pakistan Army) had recommended the creation of a port operating battalion for Chittagong, in addition to separate River Transport and River Marine Battalion to operate an augmented Cargo and Tanker flotilla. These steps were not implemented, the Army commandeered civilian water crafts for logistics and posted Army and Razakar personnel to guard various ferries, bridges, ports and other naval installations. Pakistan Navy established a Marine academy in June 1971 to support riverine operations.

Rear Admiral Mohammad Shariff had only 4 Gunboats (PNS Comilla, Rajshahi, Jessore and Sylhet) and a patrol boat (PNS Balaghat) in East Pakistan, while the navy remodeled 17 civilian ships into gunboats by adding 12.7/20 mm guns, and .30/.50 caliber Browning

machine guns. These boats joined the fleet by August 1971, while several other boats had been fitted with 40X60 mm Bofors guns and .50 caliber machine guns in Khulna and Chittagong dockyards to serve as patrol boats. A few hundred officers and 2,000 crewmen were posted in East Pakistan in 1971. 300 Bengali seamen were transferred to West Pakistan as a precaution after March 25, 1971, while Special Service Group Navy (SSGN) teams were posted in East Pakistan.

Mukti Bahini Naval Operations

Mukti Bahini did not operate a separate naval wing during March–June 1971. River craft were requisitioned as needed. Pakistan Navy and Air Force sank one such craft, MV Ostrich, during Operation Barisal on April 26, while Pakistani gunboats sank 3 boats commanded by Mukti Bahini on May 5, 1971, at Gabura

New Mukti Bahini initiative: Naval Commandos

The Bangladesh naval commando operation that was called “Operation Jackpot” was precipitated by events in Toulon, a coastal city of southern France. The operation was planned to take on Naval Special Service Group of Pakistan Navy, after it had conducted several other operations. In 1971, there were 11 East Pakistan naval submarine crewmen receiving training there aboard a Pakistani submarine. One commissioned officer (Mosharraf Hassain) and 8 crewmen decided to take control of the submarine and to fight against Pakistan. Their plan was disclosed, however, causing them to flee from death threats made by Pakistan’s Naval Intelligence. Out of the 9 crewmen, one was killed by Pakistan Naval Intelligence, but the others managed to travel to the Indian Embassy in Geneva, Switzerland. From Geneva, embassy officials took them to New Delhi on April 9, where they began a program of top secret naval training.

Mukti Bahini reorganization

At the conclusion of Operation Searchlight and Operation Barisal, the Army and Navy had driven the Mukti Bahini into India, where they entered a period of reorganization during June and July 1971 to train guerrillas, set up networks and safe houses in the occupied territories to run the insurgency and rebuild the conventional forces. Col. M. a. G. Osmani divided the country into 11 sectors, while planning

to send 2,000–5,000 guerrillas inside Bangladesh every month with 3/4 weeks training to hit all targets of opportunity, while build up the regular force to seize territory in Sylhet, Indian officials suggested fielding a force of 8,000 guerrillas with regular troops in leadership position with 3 or 4 month training. The solution was to activate the hitherto inactive Sector No. 10 as a special sector for naval commandos with Col. Osmani in charge from May 13 onwards, and this Naval commando force was to be trained as per the Indian suggestion, acting as an elite force for attacking riverine and seaborne targets.

Col. Osmani's initial strategy of sending 2000–5000 guerrillas inside Bangladesh every month since July and hitting the border outposts with regular battalions had not yielded expected results for various reasons, and Pakistani commanders were confident that they have contained the "Monsoon" offensive of Mukti Bahini. As the pace of military operations in Bangladesh slacked off, the civilian morale was adversely affected, which prompted East-Pakistan administrative authorities to claim that the situation had returned to "normal". In response to this declaration, the Mukti Bahini launched 2 operations: 1) Guerrilla attacks in targets in Dhaka by a crack commando group trained by Major ATM Haider (ex-SSG commando), and 2) the simultaneous mining and damaging of ships in Chittagong, Chandpur, Mongla and Narayanganj on August 15, which became known in Bangladesh and international media as "Operation Jackpot".

Setup and Training

After initial training in Delhi under commander Sharma and DFI chief Brd. Gupta, from April 25 to May 15, the trainers planned for bigger actions. The river transport system was vital for economic activity given the primitive state of the road and railways system of East Pakistan. Major Jalil, Colonel M. A. G. Osmani and Indian Commander Bhattachariya in collaboration with top regional commanders established the secret camp, codenamed *C2P*, in Plassey, West Bengal on May 23 to train volunteers selected from various Mukti Bahini sectors (Bangladesh was divided in 11 operational sectors for Mukti Bahini operations) for this purpose. Initially 300 volunteers were chosen, ultimately 499 commandos were trained in the camp. The course included swimming, survival training, using limpet mines, hand-to-hand combat and navigation. By August 1971, the first batch

of commandos were ready for operation. The Camp Commander at C2P was Commander M. N. Samanth, Training Coordinator was Lt. Commander G. Martis, both from the Indian Navy, while 20 Indian instructors along with the 8 Bengali submariners became trainers. Pakistani Intelligence agents scouted the camp in June and July but Indian security measures prevented any harm to the camp and apprehended all infiltrators.

The Operation

The operation was planned in the last week of July, under tight security. Information on river tides, weather and East Pakistan naval infrastructure and deployment was collected through the Mukti Bahini. Selected commandos were sent from C2P to forward bases in Tripura and West Bengal, where a final briefing was given to them. Mukti Bahini in Sector No. 1 assisted the group going to Chittagong, Sector No. 2 aided the groups going to Chandpur and Narayanganj and Sector No. 9 assisted the group targeting Mongla. Each commando carried a pair of fins, a knife, a limpet mine, and swimming trunks. Some had compasses, 1 in 3 commandos had sten guns and hand grenades, the group leaders carried a transistor radio. All the groups carried their own equipment to their targets and after entering Bangladesh between August 3 and 9, reached their destinations by August 12, using the local Mukti Bahini network of safehouses. A pair of songs was played in India Radio (Akashbani) at specific times to convey the intended signal for commencing the operations. The first song (Amar putul ajke prothom jabe shoshur bari) was played on August 13, the second song (Ami tomay joto shuniyechilem gan tar bodole chaini kono dan) on August 14. The result of this operation was:

- **Chittagong:** Sixty commandos were divided into 3 groups of 20 each, but one group failed to arrive due to Pakistani security on time. Out of 40 commandos, 9 refused to take part, while 31 commandos mined 10 ships instead of 22 initially planned on August 16. Between 1:45 and 2:15 am, explosions sank the MV Al-Abbas, the MV Hormuz and the Orient barge no. 6, sinking 19,000 tons of arms and ammunition along with damaging/sinking 7 other barges/ships.
- **Chandpur:** 20 commandos were sent to mine ships at Chandpur. Two commandos ultimately refused to take part, the other 18

divided into 6 groups and mined 4 ships. 3 steamers/barges were damaged or sunk.

- **Narayanganj:** 20 commandos conducted the sabotage operation. Four ships were sunk or damaged.
- **Mongla:** 60 commandos went to Mongla port. This team was divided into 5 groups of 12 members each. Ultimately 48 commandos mined 6 ships at Mongla. Twelve commandos had been sent on a separate mission.

The simultaneous attacks on Pakistan naval shipping assets on August 16 destroyed the myth of normalcy in East Pakistan when the news was flashed in the international media. Pakistan Army investigation concluded that no one had imagined Mukti Bahini capable of conducting such an operation.

Pakistani countermeasures

Pakistan Navy had taken measures to safeguard East Pakistan naval assets since March 25, 1971. Pakistan Marine battalion under Captain Zamir deployed 3 Naval Marine companies and a Naval platoon at Chittagong in November 1971, while the Marine base PNS Haider was established at Chittagong. Two Fast Gunboats were obtained from Royal Saudi Navy, but PNS Sadaqat and PNS Rifaqat were never deployed in East Pakistan. Pakistan Army increased security at bridges, ferries and ports, setting up numerous bunkers and strong points near these installations.

The Naval Special Service Group fought back to protect its naval assets. A small teams of Pakistani Special Service Group Navy (SSGN) and Marines were established that took aggressive counter-measure to eliminate the threat. Naval SSGNs, under Commander David Felix, were ordered to kill Bengali commando leaders (a total failure, 7 Bengali submariners survived the war while one was KIA in October 1971), While the SSGNs were successful in killing a number of Bengali guerrillas, they failed to protect naval assets in East Pakistan waters, which was the main objective of Operation Jackpot.

Assessment

Not all Naval commando missions met with success. Tightened security prevented any operations in Chittagong after the first week of October, while four attempts to damage the Hardinge Bridge failed.

Some Commando teams were ambushed and prevented from reaching their objectives. Misfortune and miscalculation caused some missions to fail. Security measures prevented any sabotage attempts on the Oil depots at Narayanganj, Bogura, Faridpur and Chittagong, and Mukti Bahini managed to damage the Oil depots at Chittagong and Naryanganj using an Alouette Helicopters and a Twin Otter plane in December 2, 1971.

In total, 515 commandos received training at C2P. Eight commandos were killed, 34 wounded and 15 captured during August–December 1971. Naval commandos managed to sink or damage 126 ships/coasters/ferries during that time span, while one source confirms at least 65 vessels of various types (15 Pakistani ships, 11 coasters, 7 gunboats, 11 barges, 2 tankers and 19 river craft by November 1971). had been sunk between August–November 1971. At least 100,000 tons of shipping was sunk or crippled, jetties and wharves were disabled and channels blocked, and the commandos kept East Pakistan in a state of siege without having a single vessel The operational capability of Pakistan Navy was reduced as a result of Operation Jackpot.

Operation Hotpants

After The operation of August 16, all commandos returned to India. After this no pre-planned simultaneous operation was launched by the Naval Commandos. Instead, some groups were sent to destroy specific targets, and other commandos began to hit targets as opportunity presented itself.

Major Jalil, Commander of Mukti bahini Sector No. 9 had obtained permission from Premier Tajuddin Ahmed to form a naval unit in August and had requested 4 Gunboats to Commander M. N. Samanth. In October In October 1971 Kolkata Port Trust donated 2 patrol crafts (Ajay and Akshay) to Mukti Bahini. The boats underwent a month long refitting at Khidirpur dockyard at the cost of 3.8 million Indian Rupees to carry 2 Canadian 40X60 mm Bofors Guns and 2 light engines and 8 ground mines, four on each side of the deck in addition to 11 ground mines. Renamed BNS Padma and Palash, the boats were crewed by 44 Bengali sailors and 12 Naval commandos, the boats were officered by India Navy personnel and handed over to Mukti Bahini on October 30, 1971. Bangladesh Government in Exile State Minister Captain Kamruzzaman was present when the boats

were commissioned by Kolkata Port Trust Chairman Mr. P. K. Sen. Lt. Commander KP Roy and K. Mitra on Indian Navy commanded the boats. The mission for Bangladesh Navy flotilla was:

- Mine the Chalna port entry point
- Attack Pakistani shipping

Escorted by an Indian Navy Frigate, on November 10 these boats successfully mined the entrance of Mongla port. They also chased the British ship "The City of St. Albans" away from Moingla on November 11, 1971.

Naval Commandos killed in Operation Jackpot

- Commando Abdur Raquib, who was killed during the Foolchhori Ghat Operation
- Commando Hossain Farid, who was executed during the second Chittagong operation. He was captured by Pakistani army, who tortured him to death by placing him inside a manhole and bending his body until his vertebral column was shattered.
- Commando Khabiruzzaman, who was killed in second operation in Faridpur
- Commando Sirajul Islam, M. Aziz, Aftab Uddin, and Rafiqul Islam, nothing further is known about them.

Indian Army IV corps operation (November 21, 1971)

The plan of operation for the Indian Army IV corps (8 Mountain Div., 23 Mountain Div., 57 Mountain Div. and "Kilo Force") may have been codenamed "Operation Jackpot". The opposition forces included the Pakistani 14th Infantry division defending Sylhet, Maulaviabazar and Akhaura, the 39th ad hoc division in Comilla, Laksham and Feni and the 97th independent infantry brigade stationed in Chittagong. Indian army had seized salients in the Eastern border from November 21, 1971. After Pakistan launched air attacks on India on December 3, the Indian army crossed the border into Bangladesh. By the end of the war on December 16, 1971, the Indian army had isolated and surrounded the remnants of the 14th division in Sylhet and Bhairabazar, the 39th division was cornered in Comilla and Chittagong, with all other areas of Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong clear of enemy forces. Part of the corps had crossed the Meghna river using the "Meghna Heli Bridge" and using local boats to drive towards Dhaka when the Pakistani army surrendered.

Post-independence

The newly formed Bangladeshi armed forces incorporated the units and guerrillas of the Mukti Bahini. Gen. Osmani, who had led the Mukti Bahini was appointed the General of the Bangladesh armed forces. For many years, there was active discrimination in favour of the inductees from the Mukti Bahini against those Bengali officers who had continued service in the Pakistani armed forces or had been detained in West Pakistan. A group of angered officers assassinated the president Sheikh Mujib on August 15, 1975 and established a regime with politician Khondaker Mostaq Ahmed as President of Bangladesh and new army chief Maj. Gen. Ziaur Rahman. The military itself was subject of divisions as Mujib's assassins were overthrown by the pro-Mujib Brig. Gen. Khaled Mosharraf on 3 November, who himself was soon overthrown by a socialist group of officers under Col. Abu Taher on 7 November who returned Ziaur Rahman to power—an event now called the *Sipoy-Janata Biplob (Soldiers and People's Coup)*. Under the presidency of Ziaur Rahman, the military was reorganised to remove conflicts between rival factions and discontented cadre. However, Ziaur Rahman was himself overthrown in a 1981 coup attempt, and a year later, Lt. Gen. Hossain Mohammad Ershad took power from the elected government of president Abdus Sattar. The military remained the most important force in national politics under the regimes of Ziaur Rahman and later Hossain Mohammad Ershad until democracy was restored in 1991.

Modern period

Having relied primarily on India and Soviet Union for military aid, Bangladesh has also developed military ties with the People's Republic of China and the United States. The Bangladesh Army has been actively involved in United Nations Peace Support Operations (UNPSO). During the first Gulf War in 1991, the Bangladesh Army sent a 2,193 member team to monitor peace in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Bangladesh Army also participated in peace keeping activities in Namibia, Cambodia, Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Mozambique, former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Haiti, Tajikistan, Western Sahara, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Georgia, East Timor, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia. As of October 2008, Bangladesh remained the second largest contributor with 9,800 troops in the UN Peacekeeping forces.

Until a peace accord was signed in 1997, the Bangladeshi military engaged in counterinsurgency operations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts fighting the Shanti Bahini separatist group. In 2001, Bangladeshi military units engaged in clashes with the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) along the northern border. Controversy also emerged over possible links maintained by the Bangladeshi military and intelligence agencies with Islamic terrorist groups and anti-India secessionist outfits. Several projects and schemes aiming to expand and modernise the Bangladeshi armed forces have been launched by the regime of prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia

MEMORIES OF BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR

The Bangladesh liberation war started in the night of March 25/26, 1971. I was working as a reporter for Patriot at Gauhati (Guwahati was still not the spelling). On March 30 or April 1, I got instructions from my Delhi office to go immediately to 'some place close to the Indo-Bangla border' and report what was happening. I decided to go to Karimganj. A journalist friend of mine, Sachin Barooah, also joined in.

We flew to Silchar where another local journalist, Shantanu Ghosh, joined us. The Calcutta newspapers at the time were daily reporting on the 'spectacular successes' of the Mukti Bahini against the Pakistani Army. Reading those reports, one got the impression that Bangladesh was going to be liberated in a matter of days. But we soon discovered that it was a misleading picture.

There is an Army Cantonment at Masimpur on the outskirts of Silchar town. There, the Army officers were very cooperative and communicating. They put us in touch with the reality. The war was not going to end soon, they explained. It would continue for months—maybe even more than a year. The Liberation Army could be compared to the Maquis formed by the French Resistance in German-occupied France in the early days of the Second World War. With the help of a large map, they briefed us about the actual situation in Bangladesh.

Next, I went to the border town of Karimganj and pitched my tent there. Hundreds of panicky people were daily crossing the border into Karimganj. It was learnt from them that the Pak Army was nowhere near the border; it was at Sylhet. Through the border post at

Sela I used to cross the border for news hunting. The police officers on the other side were quite decent but there was very little hard news about what was going on deep in the country.

We were staying at a hotel, which was also the shelter of many Mukti Bahini fighters. Every morning they would leave to carry out their mission, requesting us to keep the door of our hotel room open. And every morning on waking up we would find that the two of us were in bed but about 20 to 22 people were sleeping on the floor. Without our being aware of it they had come back at the dead of the night.

One day, a BSF officer, Captain Samuel, with whom we had grown friendly, asked us whether we were getting 'good' news. Not much, we said. In a conspiratorial whisper, he told us to go early next morning to a certain tea garden about 30-35 miles from Karimganj, and 'see things'. What was there to see?—we asked. 'Why should I tell you everything? Go and find out.' Then with a wink he said: 'Don't ever tell anyone I have tipped you to go there.'

Next morning, we hired a taxi and reached the tea garden. We paid off the taxi at the gate and entered the garden. After walking some distance, we noticed there was a BSF camp on the top of a hillock from where someone was watching us through a binocular. We walked up the hillock. They were not pleased to see us. They asked us who we were and why we had come there. We told them we were journalists. The tension became all the more visible on their faces. "Are you East Pakistani reporters or Indian?" We told them we were Indian and showed our press accreditation cards. They seemed slightly at ease but wanted to know why we had turned up there at that hour.

We smelt something was going on. The garden was right on the border. Soon we saw a flurry of activity was going on below. We quickly came down and saw that several Army trucks had pulled up right on the border and big tins of petrol and diesel and quantities of automatic weapons were being unloaded, carried a few steps on the other side of the border and being loaded on to trucks of the Mukti Bahini.

A Major was overseeing the operation. On learning my identity as Patriot correspondent he gave a sheepish smile and said: "Actually

these are their weapons which we had seized. As we don't need these, we are handing these back to them." But the very next moment he gave the game away. "I hope you will be patriotic enough not to report it."

We were eye-witnesses to the delivery of the first consignment of Indian arms to the Mukti Bahini through the Assam sector. As patriotic Indians, we, of course, did not report it. India's physical involvement in the Bangladesh liberation war had, indeed, begun.

DACCA and the rest of Bangladesh, except Sylhet, fell to the Indian Army on December 16, 1971, but Sylhet held out for one more day and fell on December 17. On December 18th early morning, we set out by car from Gauhati for Sylhet. 'We' included Congress leaders Sarat Sinha (who became the Chief Minister of Assam the very next month), Girin Choudhury, Shasanka Shekhar Lahiri and two journalists—Manik Chakravarty of the PTI and myself. Apurba, Sarat Babu's son, took the wheel.

We passed through the Tamabil border post of Meghalaya. After proceeding a little, we found the road had been dug up or damaged at many places by the Mukti Bahini to prevent the Pak Army from approaching the area which was the Bahini's bastion. Apurba negotiated the potholed road skilfully. Most villages were deserted. Bridges had been blown up and rickety wood-and-bamboo bridges had taken their place. Very slowly our car crossed these bridges. In some rivulets the water was so shallow that the car could wade through it.

Quite often we came across fields where sharp bamboo stakes had been driven into the soil at an acute angle, obviously to impede the movement of the Mukhi Bahini or the Indian Army. The villages looked deserted. It was around noon that we drove into Sylhet which looked like a ghost town.

There was no food, no power and no light. We went straight to the house of Purnendu Sen Gupta who was a Congress Member of the Assam Assembly before partition. He knew Sarat Sinha and Girin Ghoudhury well. The entire frontage of Purnendu Babu's house had cracked diagonally across as a result of Indian mortar fire. As the sun went down, the entire town was engulfed in pitch darkness. Our host, Purnendu Babu, did a miracle. He arranged rice, dal and curry for all of us.

Next morning we walked about the town. We visited the area where Mukti Bahini commander, Captain Osman, had his house. Movement had to be on foot. There was no vehicle—not even cycle-rickshaws. No policeman could be seen anywhere. At one place I saw something very strange. Right in front of a one-storeyed school building two 500 pound bombs had been dropped. They had made two small ponds. But the school building was standing intact.

Local leaders of the Awami League and Mukti Bahini men came to see us in large numbers. They expressed their gratitude for the help India had rendered in liberating their country from the 'Khan Sena' (Pakistani Army). Next day we returned to Gauhati.

I went back to Sylhet exactly a week later, this time with a busload of Assam MLAs of all parties. The town had returned to normalcy. The familiar traffic policeman was back on his podium. The huge balls of tangled wire had been removed and the roads cleared. The post office and the telegraph office had opened. I sent an obliging young man to the post office with a press telegram for my paper. I gave him my press bearing authority card and some money, telling him if they won't accept the card, he should send a paid telegram. The young man came back with the receipt and gave me back both the money and the card. "No, the card is not valid here. But your telegram has been sent, free of charge," he said. Those were the days of euphoria just after the liberation.

The Indian Army officers took us to a few bunkers used by the Pakistani soldiers. In some of them we found torn saris and undergarments of women. There were some condoms also. "Look, this is what the Pak soldiers did to the women-folk here and brought disgrace on their uniforms," an Army officer told us.

On our way back from the bunkers, we spotted some Mongoloid-looking men seated on the verandah of a house. One of them was immediately recognised by a fellow-journalist as a Naga rebel leader. This was an unexpected find. As we hastened toward the house the alarmed Army officers led us away while the Naga gentlemen were hastily taken inside the house. We later learnt that they had taken shelter in Bangladesh and were captured by our Army after the surrender of the Pak Army. It was a bonus for the Indian Army.

Timeline of Bangladesh Liberation War

The Bangladesh Liberation War started on March 26, 1971 and ended on December 16, 1971. Some of the major events of the war are listed in the timeline below.

Interactive Timeline of the Bangladesh Liberation War*Before the war*

- March 1: General Yahya Khan calls off the session of National Council to be held on March 3 in a radio address.
- March 7: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman - leader of Awami League party that had won a landslide victory in East Pakistan in the Federal Elections in 1970, but never been granted authority - announces to a jubilant crowd at the Dhaka Race Course ground, "The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation! The struggle this time is the struggle for independence!".
- March 9: Workers of Chittagong port refuse to unload weapons from the ship 'Swat'.
- March 10: Expatriate Bengali students demonstrate in front of the United Nations Headquarters and calls for UN intervention to put an end to violence on Bengali people.
- March 16: Yahya Khan starts negotiation with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- March 19: Nearly 50 people die as Pakistan Army opens fire on demonstrators at Jaydevpur.
- March 24: Pakistan Army opens fire on Bengali demonstrators in Syedpur, Rangpur and Chittagong. More than a thousand people are killed.

Events of the War*March*

- March 25: Pakistan Army starts Operation Searchlight in Dhaka and rest of the country, attacking general civilians, political activists, students, and Bengali members of armed forces and police
- March 26: At 1.15 AM, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is arrested by the Pakistani 3 commando unit. Independence of Bangladesh is declared by Father of the nation BongoBondhu Sheikh Mujibiur

Rahman few minutes before he was arrested by Pakistani occupation army. At 2.30 pm Independence of Bangladesh was declared by Awami league leader of Chittagong M. A. Hannan on behalf of Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from Kalurghat. This is Bangladesh's official Independence Day.

- March 27: Independence of Bangladesh is again declared by Maj. Ziaur Rahman on behalf of Father of the Nation Bongobondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Scars of Bangladesh independence war

Pakistan was losing a war and it was also losing its eastern half, separated from the rest of the country by more than 1,600km (990 miles) of India.

After nine months of internal strife and a military crackdown against Bangladeshi separatists, the full-scale war with India was swift and decisive. It lasted just 13 days.

The defeat of the Pakistani army on 16 December 1971 was a triumph for India and the Bengali insurgents it had assisted.

For Pakistan, it was perhaps the darkest moment in its history and the ultimate humiliation. The army stood accused of mass murder, torture and rape. Tens of thousands of Pakistani soldiers were taken prisoners of war.

Forty years on, I decided to examine the legacy of this brief but bitter war.

Growing up in Pakistan, we did not talk much about the war at home. In school, we seemed to rush through that period of our history.

On a recent visit to my old school in Karachi, I picked up an officially approved history book.

The book recognises that East Pakistanis felt culturally subjugated and economically exploited by their dominant Western half.

But it suggests the causes for separation include India, Hindu propaganda and international conspiracies.

At my old school I asked a group of teenage students if they had heard of the Bangladeshi accusations of genocide or widespread rape by the Pakistani army.

Liberation War Museum, Bangladesh established in 1996, commemorates heroic struggle of Bengalee nation for democracy and national rights which following genocide unleashed by military rulers of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, turned into armed struggle with emergence of Bangladesh as Secular Democratic State in December 1971.

Museum is housed in a two-storied building with displays in six galleries. Currently, Museum collection number 10,732 (May 2004) objects, which include rare photographs, documents, media coverages and materials used by freedom fighters and martyrs of liberation war. However the museum can display around 1300 objects due to paucity of space and its midterm plan includes purchase of a land for building a proper museum. Liberation War Museum, excavated two killing fields in Dhaka suburbs, preserves one site and these human remains have added dimension to the displays.

Liberation War Museum is outcome of citizen's effort and is run by a Board of Trustee. It is now recognized, nationally and internationally, as credible institution on history of Bangladesh independence. The museum through its special programmes endeavours to link history of liberation war with contemporary pressing social and human right issues. LWM is founder member of International Coalition of Historic Site Museum of Conscience and institutional member of American Association of Museums.

Visitors to the museum realize how through popular struggle and human sacrifices fundamental principles of democracy, secularism and nationalism of Bangladesh constitution (1972) evolved. Attempts have been taken through displays and regular programmes to create a living museum where visitor/participants can draw contemporary relevance for building national unity and a tolerant society against human rights abuses.

Mission Statement

A museum dedicated to all freedom loving people and victims of mindless atrocities and destructions committed in the name of religion, ethnicity and sovereignty. The museum encourages reflection upon the sufferings and heroism of Bangladesh liberation war and its ideals.

Liberation War Museum endeavors to link this history with contemporary pressing social and humanitarian issues.

Accreditation and Affiliations

Liberation War Museum is a founder member of International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience and is member of its Steering Committee (www.sitesofconscience.org). The Coalition endeavours to link historic site with contemporary pressing social and human right issue. Members of the Coalition include District Six Museum of apartheid period in South Africa, Slave Museum in Senegal, Jewish resettlement and concentration camp in Terezin, Czechoslovakia, Civil Right's Museum and Tenement Museum on early immigrants in United States.

Liberation War Museum is institutional member of American Association of Museums. It is registered with NGO Bureau in Bangladesh.

Independence War of Bangladesh

The people of Bangladesh discovered their identity through the Language Movement in 1952. The struggle to establish their identity and national spirit began soon after 1947, when the British left India dividing it into two countries: India and Pakistan. Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, was part of Pakistan, which was put together by combining two geographically, culturally, and linguistically separate groups of people. The people of Bangladesh soon realized that being a part of Pakistan, which was created on the two nation theory, there was little scope for the distance culture of Bangladeshis to flourish. The Bangla language was the most important vehicle of the cultural expression for the people of this land. The refusal of the central government in West Pakistan to grant official status to the Bangla became the focal point of struggle.

The contradiction of the two Pakistans, the racial oppression and the exploitation of the West over the East was gradually unveiled. The struggle for the consciousness of identity and cultural freedom which began with the advent of the student movements of the 60's gained momentum in the mass movement of non-cooperation in 1969. Though it brought about the fall of a mighty military ruler like Ayub

Khan, the ultimate goal of self-rule was not achieved. After this, came the election of 1970 with absolute victory of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In the elections of December 7, 1970 the Awami League won 160 out of 162 seats in East Pakistan, all but two, and would have had a clear majority in the new assembly had it been convened. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became the majority party leader of the Pakistan National Assembly.

The military rulers of Pakistan refused to allow the Awami League to form a government. A heinous conspiracy was plotted by the then Pakistani military dictator Yahya Khan along with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Even though a conspiracy was being planned, General Yahya Khan was careful not to let this be known. On the 13th of February he announced that on the 3rd of March there would be a session of National Assembly in Dhaka. Everyone began to eagerly await that day. Major General Ziaur Rahman on behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, announced the declaration of independence from Kalurghat Radio Station. A full scale movement of non-cooperation with the military government began on the **26th of March, 1971** which is celebrated as the Independence Day every year. Thus Bangladesh plunged into a gory war seeking its own birth.

The Pakistan Army began their genocide by attacking the innocent Bangladeshis of Dhaka city. The dwellers of Dhaka city never confronted such unimaginable cruelty. The Pakistani army systematically massacred 35,000 Bengali intellectuals and unleashed a brutal war against the Bangalees of East Pakistan to prevent their aspire of independence. But the brave people of this beloved land did not let the dream encircled flag of red and green fall down to dust.

During the nine month struggle which ensued an estimated three million Bengalis died and ten million refugees fled into India. Sheikh Mujib was imprisoned in west Pakistan. A Bangladesh Government in exile was established. The Bangalees started a smart and courageous guerrilla warfare. At one point, India also got involved in the war. The actual military campaign of India took place in December and lasted only ten days. The Indian Army launched a massive offensive against the Pakistani forces to support the Bangladesh movement. On **December 16, 1971**, the Pakistan army surrendered.

Bangladesh honour for Indians who helped in its liberation

In a historic recognition spreading over two years, Bangladesh concluded giving awards to its 'foreign friends' who played a crucial role for her independence 42 years ago.

In the seventh and last phase of recognition, the country this week honoured more than 60 foreign dignitaries and organisations, including 44 from India. The process began on July 25, 2011.

In all a total of 338 foreign nationals and organisations, mostly from India, were felicitated for supporting the nation's liberation war against Pakistan.

The former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was the first among prominent foreign friends who was given posthumously the highest state honour — Bangladesh Freedom Honour. Her daughter-in-law and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, received the award in Dhaka on her behalf. President Pranab Mukherjee received the award in February this year.

On October 1, the 'Bangladesh Liberation War Honour' was conferred on the former Indian President, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, and the former Prime Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda.

V.K. Krishna Menon was one of the prominent recipients of the 'Bangladesh Liberation War Honour' for his contribution to the country's independence as the Defence Minister of India. The award was received by Radha Anand Menon, grand niece of Menon, from Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Ms. Radha and her husband Anand Menon were in Dhaka to receive the award as guest of Bangladesh government.

Four award recipients were each from Pakistan and the U.S., two each from the U.K., Japan and Egypt, and one each from Sri Lanka and Turkey. The State accolades were given in two categories — 'Bangladesh Liberation War Honour' and 'Friends of Liberation War Honour'.

These friends extended all possible help to Bangladesh refugees and freedom fighters providing them food, humanitarian relief, medical facilities, military training, access to global media, generation of public opinion and mobilisation of financial assistance.

Mr. Hamid expressed deep gratitude to the foreign nationals and organisations. "We know, we have not been able to confer honour to many of our friends who had sacrificed a lot for the independence of Bangladesh," he said. "But they silently stood beside us during the war."

Ms. Hasina sought global support to accomplish the war crimes trial, to try those who had perpetrated crimes against humanity as cohorts of the Pakistani Army. She told the foreign guests that her government was determined to complete the trial of war criminals in a fair, neutral and transparent manner to bring an end to the culture of impunity.

The prominent Indian nationals who received "Friends of Liberation War Honour" in the concluding phase were, among others, Air Vice Marshal Swaroop Krishna Kaul, Maj. Gen. Lachhman Singh Lehl, film actor Waheeda Rehman, Zainal Abedin, Biswajit R. Chatterjee, Gouri Ghosh, Shakti Chattapadhaya, Pannalal Dasgupta, Shaheed Capt. Manmohan Sagor Duggal, Asghar Ali, Snehangshu Kanta Acharyya, Somnath Hore, Maulana Syed Asad Madni, Suchitra Mitra, Kulwant Singh Pannu, Kishore Parekh, Subhash Mukhopadhaya, Samar Sen, Shaheed Subedar Mailkiat Singh, Sukhdev Singh Sanhu and Tapishwar Narain Raina.

One of the award recipients, Swaroop Krishna Kaul, a retired Indian Air Chief Marshal, led a fleet of aircraft which bombed the Government House in Dhaka on December 15, 1971, where Pakistani General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi was holding a meeting with his officials. The surprise attack played an important role leading to the historic surrender of the Pakistani forces to the India-Bangladesh Joint Command on December 16, 1971.

4

Indo – Pakistani War in 1971

The **Indo-Pakistani War of 1971** was the direct military confrontation between India and Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Indian, Bangladeshi and international sources consider the beginning of the war to have been Operation Chengiz Khan, when Pakistan launched pre-emptive air strikes on 11 Indian airbases on 3 December 1971, leading to India's entry into the war of independence in East Pakistan on the side of Bangladeshi nationalist forces, and the commencement of hostilities with West Pakistan. Lasting just 13 days, it is considered to be one of the shortest wars in history.

During the course of the war, Indian and Pakistani forces clashed on the eastern and western fronts. The war effectively came to an end after the Eastern Command of the Pakistani Armed Forces signed the Instrument of Surrender, on 16 December 1971 in Dhaka, marking the liberation of the new nation of Bangladesh. East Pakistan had officially seceded from Pakistan on 26 March 1971. Between 90,000 and 93,000 members of the Pakistan Armed Forces including paramilitary personnel were taken as Prisoners of War by the Indian Army. It is estimated that between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 civilians were killed in Bangladesh. As a result of the conflict, a further eight to ten million people fled the country at the time to seek refuge in neighbouring India

BACKGROUND

The Indo-Pakistani conflict was sparked by the Bangladesh Liberation war, a conflict between the traditionally dominant West Pakistanis and the majority East Pakistanis. The Bangladesh Liberation

war ignited after the 1970 Pakistani election, in which the East Pakistani Awami League won 167 of 169 seats in East Pakistan and secured a simple majority in the 313-seat lower house of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament of Pakistan). Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman presented the Six Points to the President of Pakistan and claimed the right to form the government. After the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, refused to yield the premiership of Pakistan to Mujibur, President Yahya Khan called the military, dominated by West Pakistanis, to suppress dissent in East Pakistan.

Mass arrests of dissidents began, and attempts were made to disarm East Pakistani soldiers and police. After several days of strikes and non-co-operation movements, the Pakistani military cracked down on Dhaka on the night of 25 March 1971. The Awami League was banished, and many members fled into exile in India. Mujib was arrested on the night of 25–26 March 1971 at about 1:30 am (as per Radio Pakistan's news on 29 March 1971) and taken to West Pakistan. The next action carried out was Operation Searchlight, an attempt to kill the intellectual elite of the east.

On 26 March 1971, Ziaur Rahman, a major in the Pakistani army, declared the independence of Bangladesh. In April, exiled Awami League leaders formed a government-in-exile in Baidyanathtala of Meherpur. The East Pakistan Rifles, a paramilitary force, defected to the rebellion. Bangladesh Force namely Mukti Bahini consisting of Niyomito Bahini (Regular Force) and Gono Bahini (Guerilla Force) was formed under the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) General Mohammad Ataul Ghani Osmany.

India's involvement in Bangladesh Liberation War

The Pakistan army conducted a widespread genocide against the Bengali population of East Pakistan, aimed in particular at the minority Hindu population, leading to approximately 10 million people fleeing East Pakistan and taking refuge in the neighbouring Indian states. The East Pakistan-India border was opened to allow refugees safe shelter in India. The governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura established refugee camps along the border. The resulting flood of impoverished East Pakistani refugees placed an intolerable strain on India's already overburdened economy.

General Tikka Khan earned the nickname 'Butcher of Bengal' due to the widespread atrocities he committed. He was previously

known as the 'Butcher of Balochistan' for other infamous atrocities he had committed. General Niazi commenting on his actions noted 'On the night between 25/26 March 1971 General Tikka struck. Peaceful night was turned into a time of wailing, crying and burning. General Tikka let loose everything at his disposal as if raiding an enemy, not dealing with his own misguided and misled people. The military action was a display of stark cruelty more merciless than the massacres at Bukhara and Baghdad by Chengiz Khan and Halaku Khan... General Tikka... resorted to the killing of civilians and a scorched earth policy. His orders to his troops were: 'I want the land not the people...' Major General Farman had written in his table diary, "Green land of East Pakistan will be painted red". It was painted red by Bengali blood.'

The Indian government repeatedly appealed to the international community, but failing to elicit any response, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 27 March 1971 expressed full support of her government for the independence struggle of the people of East Pakistan. The Indian leadership under Prime Minister Gandhi quickly decided that it was more effective to end the genocide by taking armed action against Pakistan than to simply give refuge to those who made it across to refugee camps. Exiled East Pakistan army officers and members of the Indian Intelligence immediately started using these camps for recruitment and training of Mukti Bahini guerrillas.

The mood in West Pakistan had also turned increasingly jingoistic and militaristic against East Pakistan and India. By the end of September, an organised propaganda campaign, possibly orchestrated by elements within the Government of Pakistan, resulted in stickers proclaiming *Crush India* becoming a standard feature on the rear windows of vehicles in Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Lahore and soon spread to the rest of West Pakistan. By October, other stickers proclaimed *Hang the Traitor* in an apparent reference to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

India's official engagement with Pakistan

Objective

By November, war seemed inevitable. Throughout November, thousands of people led by West Pakistani politicians marched in Lahore and across West Pakistan, calling for Pakistan to *Crush India*. India

responded by starting a massive buildup of Indian forces on the border with East Pakistan. The Indian military waited until December, when the drier ground would make for easier operations and Himalayan passes would be closed by snow, preventing any Chinese intervention. On 23 November, Yahya Khan declared a state of emergency in all of Pakistan and told his people to prepare for war.

On the evening of 3 December Sunday, at about 5:40 pm, the Pakistani Air Force (PAF) launched a pre-emptive strike on eleven airfields in north-western India, including Agra, which was 300 miles (480 km) from the border. At the time of this attack the Taj Mahal was camouflaged with a forest of twigs and leaves and draped with burlap because its marble glowed like a white beacon in the moonlight.

This preemptive strike known as Operation Chengiz Khan, was inspired by the success of Israeli Operation Focus in the Arab–Israeli Six Day War. But, unlike the Israeli attack on Arab airbases in 1967 which involved a large number of Israeli planes, Pakistan flew no more than 50 planes to India.

In an address to the nation on radio that same evening, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi held that the air strikes were a declaration of war against India and the Indian Air Force responded with initial air strikes that very night. These air strikes were expanded to massive retaliatory air strikes the next morning and thereafter which followed interceptions by Pakistanis anticipating this action.

This marked the official start of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the immediate mobilisation of troops and launched a full-scale invasion. This involved Indian forces in a massive coordinated air, sea, and land assault. Indian Air Force started flying sorties against Pakistan from midnight. The main Indian objective on the western front was to prevent Pakistan from entering Indian soil. There was no Indian intention of conducting any major offensive into West Pakistan.

Naval hostilities

Naval reconnaissance submarine operations were started by the Pakistan Navy on both eastern and western front. In the western theatre of the war, the Indian Navy, under the command of Vice Admiral S.N. Kohli, successfully attacked Karachi's port in Operation

Trident on the night of 4–5 December, using missile boats, sinking Pakistani destroyer PNS Khyber and minesweeper PNS Muhafiz; PNS Shah Jahan was also badly damaged. 720 Pakistani sailors were killed or wounded, and Pakistan lost reserve fuel and many commercial ships, thus crippling the Pakistan Navy's further involvement in the conflict. Operation Trident was followed by Operation Python on the night of 8–9 December, in which Indian missile boats attacked the Karachi port, resulting in further destruction of reserve fuel tanks and the sinking of three Pakistani merchant ships.

In the eastern theatre of the war, the Indian Eastern Naval Command, under Vice Admiral Krishnan, completely isolated East Pakistan by a naval blockade in the Bay of Bengal, trapping the Eastern Pakistani Navy and eight foreign merchant ships in their ports. From 4 December onwards, the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant was deployed, and its Sea Hawk fighter-bombers attacked many coastal towns in East Pakistan including Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar. Pakistan countered the threat by sending the submarine PNS Ghazi, which sank en route under mysterious circumstances off Vishakapatnam's coast reducing Pakistan's control of Bangladeshi coastline. But on 9 December, the Indian Navy suffered its biggest wartime loss when the Pakistani submarine PNS Hangor sank the frigate INS Khukri in the Arabian Sea resulting in a loss of 18 officers and 176 sailors.

The damage inflicted on the Pakistani Navy stood at 7 gunboats, 1 minesweeper, 1 submarine, 2 destroyers, 3 patrol crafts belonging to the coast guard, 18 cargo, supply and communication vessels, and large scale damage inflicted on the naval base and docks in the coastal town of Karachi. Three merchant navy ships – Anwar Baksh, Pasni and Madhumathi – and ten smaller vessels were captured. Around 1900 personnel were lost, while 1413 servicemen were captured by Indian forces in Dhaka. According to one Pakistan scholar, Tariq Ali, the Pakistan Navy lost a third of its force in the war.

Air operations

After the initial preemptive strike, PAF adopted a defensive stance in response to the Indian retaliation. As the war progressed, the Indian Air Force continued to battle the PAF over conflict zones, but the number of sorties flown by the PAF gradually decreased day-by-day.

The Indian Air Force flew 4,000 sorties while its counterpart, the PAF offered little in retaliation, partly because of the paucity of non-Bengali technical personnel. This lack of retaliation has also been attributed to the deliberate decision of the PAF High Command to cut its losses as it had already incurred huge losses in the conflict. Though the PAF did not intervene during the Indian Navy's raid on Pakistani naval port city of Karachi, it retaliated by bombing the Okha harbour, destroying the fuel tanks used by the boats that had attacked.

In the east, the small air contingent of Pakistan Air Force No. 14 Sqn was destroyed, putting the Dhaka airfield out of commission and resulting in Indian air superiority in the east.

Attacks on Pakistan While India's grip on what had been East Pakistan tightened, the IAF continued to press home attacks against Pakistan itself. The campaign developed into a series of daylight anti-airfield, anti-radar and close-support attacks by fighters, with night attacks against airfields and strategic targets by B-57s and C-130 (Pakistan), and Canberras and An-12s (India). The PAF's F-6s were employed mainly on defensive combat air patrols over their own bases, but without air superiority the PAF was unable to conduct effective offensive operations, and its attacks were largely ineffective. During the IAF's airfield attacks, one US and one UN aircraft were damaged in Dacca, while a Canadian Air Force Caribou was destroyed at Islamabad, along with US military liaison chief Brigadier General Chuck Yeager's USAF Beech U-8 light twin.

Sporadic raids by the IAF continued against Pakistan's forward air bases in the West until the end of the war, and large scale interdiction and close-support operations, and were maintained. The PAF played a more limited part in the operations, and were reinforced by F-104s from Jordan, Mirages from an unidentified Middle Eastern ally (remains unknown) and by F-86s from Saudi Arabia. Their arrival helped camouflage the extent of Pakistan's losses. Libyan F-5s were reportedly deployed to Sargodha, perhaps as a potential training unit to prepare Pakistani pilots for an influx of more F-5s from Saudi Arabia.

Hostilities officially ended at 14:30 GMT on 17 December, after the fall of Dacca on 15 December. India claimed large gains of territory in West Pakistan (although pre-war boundaries were recognised after the war), and the independence of Pakistan's East

wing as Bangladesh was confirmed. India flew 1,978 sorties in the East and about 4,000 in the West, while the PAF flew about 30 and 2,840. More than 80 percent of the IAF's sorties were close-support and interdiction, and about 65 IAF aircraft were lost (54 losses were admitted), perhaps as many as 27 of them in air combat. Pakistan lost 72 aircraft (51 of them combat types, but admitting only 25 to enemy action). Of the Pakistani losses, at least 24 fell in air combat (although only 10 air combat losses were admitted, not including any F-6s, Mirage IIIs, or the six Jordanian F-104s which failed to return to their donors). But the imbalance in air losses was explained by the IAF's considerably higher sortie rate, and its emphasis on ground-attack missions. On the ground Pakistan suffered most, with 8,000 killed and 25,000 wounded while India lost 3,000 dead and 12,000 wounded. The loss of armoured vehicles was similarly imbalanced. This represented a major defeat for Pakistan.

Ground operations

Pakistan attacked at several places along India's western border with Pakistan, but the Indian army successfully held their positions. The Indian Army quickly responded to the Pakistan Army's movements in the west and made some initial gains, including capturing around 5,500 square miles (14,000 km) of Pakistan territory (land gained by India in Pakistani Kashmir, Pakistani Punjab and Sindh sectors was later ceded in the Simla Agreement of 1972, as a gesture of goodwill).

On the eastern front, the Indian Army joined forces with the Mukti Bahini to form the *Mitro Bahini* (Allied forces); unlike the 1965 war which had emphasised set-piece battles and slow advances, this time the strategy adopted was a swift, three-pronged assault of nine infantry divisions with attached armoured units and close air support that rapidly converged on Dhaka, the capital of East Pakistan.

Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, who commanded the eighth, twenty-third, and fifty-seventh divisions, led the Indian thrust into East Pakistan. As these forces attacked Pakistani formations, the Indian Air Force rapidly destroyed the small air contingent in East Pakistan and put the Dhaka airfield out of commission. In the meantime, the Indian Navy effectively blockaded East Pakistan.

The Indian campaign employed "blitzkrieg" techniques, exploiting weakness in the enemy's positions and bypassing opposition, and

resulted in a swift victory. Faced with insurmountable losses, the Pakistani military capitulated in less than a fortnight. On 16 December, the Pakistani forces stationed in East Pakistan surrendered.

SURRENDER OF PAKISTANI FORCES IN EAST PAKISTAN

The *Instrument of Surrender* of Pakistani forces stationed in East Pakistan was signed at Ramna Race Course in Dhaka at 16.31 IST on 16 December 1971, by Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, General Officer Commanding-in-chief of Eastern Command of the Indian Army and Lieutenant General A. A. K. Niazi, Commander of Pakistani forces in East Pakistan. As Aurora accepted the surrender, the surrounding crowds on the race course began shouting anti-Niazi and anti-Pakistan slogans.

India took approximately 90,000 prisoners of war, including Pakistani soldiers and their East Pakistani civilian supporters. 79,676 prisoners were uniformed personnel, of which 55,692 were Army, 16,354 Paramilitary, 5,296 Police, 1,000 Navy and 800 PAF. The remaining prisoners were civilians – either family members of the military personnel or collaborators (razakars). The Hamoodur Rahman Commission report instituted by Pakistan lists the Pakistani POWs as follows: Apart from soldiers, it was estimated that 15,000 Bengali civilians were also made prisoners of war.

Foreign reaction and involvement

United States and Soviet Union

The Soviet Union sympathised with the Bangladeshis, and supported the Indian Army and Mukti Bahini during the war, recognising that the independence of Bangladesh would weaken the position of its rivals—the United States and China. The USSR gave assurances to India that if a confrontation with the United States or China developed, it would take counter-measures. This assurance was enshrined in the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty signed in August 1971.

The United States supported Pakistan both politically and materially. President Richard Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger feared Soviet expansion into South and Southeast Asia. Pakistan was a close ally of the People's Republic of China, with whom Nixon had been negotiating a *rapprochement* and where he

intended to visit in February 1972. Nixon feared that an Indian invasion of West Pakistan would mean total Soviet domination of the region, and that it would seriously undermine the global position of the United States and the regional position of America's new tacit ally, China. Nixon encouraged countries like Jordan and Iran to send military supplies to Pakistan while also encouraging China to increase its arms supplies to Pakistan. The Nixon administration also ignored reports it received of the "genocidal" activities of the Pakistani Army in East Pakistan, most notably the Blood telegram. This prompted widespread criticism and condemnation both by the United States Congress and in the international press.

Then-US ambassador to the United Nations George H.W. Bush—later 41st President of the United States—introduced a resolution in the UN Security Council calling for a cease-fire and the withdrawal of armed forces by India and Pakistan. It was vetoed by the Soviet Union. The following days witnessed a great pressure on the Soviets from the Nixon-Kissinger duo to get India to withdraw, but to no avail.

It has been documented that President Nixon requested Iran and Jordan to send their F-86, F-104 and F-5 fighter jets in aid of Pakistan.

When Pakistan's defeat in the eastern sector seemed certain, Nixon deployed Task Force 74 led by the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise* into the Bay of Bengal. The *Enterprise* and its escort ships arrived on station on 11 December 1971. According to a Russian documentary, the United Kingdom deployed a carrier battle group led by the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* to the Bay, although this is unlikely as the *Eagle* was decommissioned at Portsmouth, England in January 1972.

On 6 and 13 December, the Soviet Navy dispatched two groups of cruisers and destroyers and a submarine armed with nuclear missiles from Vladivostok; they trailed US Task Force 74 into the Indian Ocean from 18 December 1971 until 7 January 1972. The Soviets also had a nuclear submarine to help ward off the threat posed by USS *Enterprise* task force in the Indian Ocean.

CHINA

As a long-standing ally of Pakistan, the People's Republic of China reacted with alarm to the evolving situation in East Pakistan and the

prospect of India invading West Pakistan and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir. Believing that just such an Indian attack was imminent, Nixon encouraged China to mobilise its armed forces along its border with India to discourage it. The Chinese did not, however, respond to this encouragement, because unlike the 1962 Sino-Indian War when India was caught entirely unaware, this time the Indian Army was prepared and had deployed eight mountain divisions to the Sino-Indian border to guard against such an eventuality. China instead threw its weight behind demands for an immediate ceasefire.

When Bangladesh applied for membership to the United Nations in 1972, China vetoed their application because two United Nations resolutions regarding the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war and civilians had not yet been implemented. China was also among the last countries to recognise independent Bangladesh, refusing to do so until 31 August 1975.

INDIA

The war stripped Pakistan of more than half of its population and with nearly one-third of its army in captivity, clearly established India's military dominance of the subcontinent. In spite of the magnitude of the victory, India was surprisingly restrained in its reaction. Mostly, Indian leaders seemed pleased by the relative ease with which they had accomplished their goals—the establishment of Bangladesh and the prospect of an early return to their homeland of the 10 million Bengali refugees who were the cause of the war. In announcing the Pakistani surrender, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared in the Indian Parliament:

“Dacca is now the free capital of a free country. We hail the people of Bangladesh in their hour of triumph. All nations who value the human spirit will recognize it as a significant milestone in man's quest for liberty.”

PAKISTAN

For Pakistan it was a complete and humiliating defeat, a psychological setback that came from a defeat at the hands of intense rival India. Pakistan lost half its population and a significant portion of its economy and suffered setbacks to its geo-political role in South

Asia. Pakistan feared that the two-nation theory was disproved and that the Islamic ideology had proved insufficient to keep Bengalis part of Pakistan. Also, the Pakistani military suffered further humiliation by having their 90,000 prisoners of war (POWs) released by India only after the negotiation and signing of the Simla Agreement on 2 July 1972. In addition to repatriation of prisoners of war also, the agreement established an ongoing structure for the negotiated resolution of future conflicts between India and Pakistan (referring to the remaining western provinces that now composed the totality of Pakistan). In signing the agreement, Pakistan also, by implication, recognised the former East Pakistan as the now independent and sovereign state of Bangladesh.

The Pakistani people were not mentally prepared to accept defeat, as the state-controlled media in West Pakistan had been projecting imaginary victories. When the surrender in East Pakistan was finally announced, people could not come terms with the magnitude of defeat, spontaneous demonstrations and mass protests erupted on the streets of major cities in West Pakistan. Also, referring to the remaining rump Western Pakistan as simply "Pakistan" added to the effect of the defeat as international acceptance of the secession of the eastern half of the country and its creation as the independent state of Bangladesh developed and was given more credence. The cost of the war for Pakistan in monetary and human resources was very high. Demoralized and finding himself unable to control the situation, General Yahya Khan surrendered power to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was sworn-in on 20 December 1971 as President and as the (first civilian) Chief Martial Law Administrator. A new and smaller western-based Pakistan emerged on 16 December 1971.

The loss of East Pakistan shattered the prestige of the Pakistani military. Pakistan lost half its navy, a quarter of its air force and a third of its army. The war also exposed the shortcomings of Pakistan's declared strategic doctrine that the "defence of East Pakistan lay in West Pakistan". Hussain Haqqani, in his book *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* notes,

"Moreover, the army had failed to fulfill its promises of fighting to the last man. The eastern command had laid down arms after

losing only 1,300 men in battle. In West Pakistan 1,200 military deaths had accompanied lackluster military performance.”

In his book *The 1971 Indo-Pak War: A Soldier's Narrative* Pakistani Major General Hakeem Arshad Qureshi a veteran of this conflict noted,

“We must accept the fact that, as a people, we had also contributed to the bifurcation of our own country. It was not a Niazi, or a Yahya, even a Mujib, or a Bhutto, or their key assistants, who alone were the cause of our break-up, but a corrupted system and a flawed social order that our own apathy had allowed to remain in place for years. At the most critical moment in our history we failed to check the limitless ambitions of individuals with dubious antecedents and to thwart their selfish and irresponsible behaviour. It was our collective ‘conduct’ that had provided the enemy an opportunity to dismember us.”

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh became an independent nation, the world's fourth most populous Muslim state. Mujibur Rahman was released from a West Pakistani prison, returning to Dhaka on 10 January 1972 and becoming the first President of Bangladesh and later its Prime Minister.

On the brink of defeat around 14 December, the Pakistani Army, and its local collaborators, systematically killed a large number of Bengali doctors, teachers and intellectuals, part of a pogrom against the Hindu minorities who constituted the majority of urban educated intellectuals. Young men, especially students, who were seen as possible rebels were also targeted. The extent of casualties in East Pakistan is not known. R.J. Rummel cites estimates ranging from one to three million people killed. Other estimates place the death toll lower, at 300,000. Bangladesh government figures state that Pakistani forces aided by collaborators killed three million people, raped 200,000 women and displaced millions of others. In 2010 Bangladesh government set up a tribunal to prosecute the people involved in alleged war crimes and those who collaborated with Pakistan. According to the Government, the defendants would be charged with crimes against humanity, genocide, murder, rape and arson.

HAMOODUR RAHMAN COMMISSION

In aftermath of war Pakistan Government constituted the Hamoodur Rahman Commission headed by Justice Hamoodur Rahman in 1971 to investigate the political and military causes for defeat and the Bangladesh atrocities during the war. The commission's report was classified and its publication banned by Bhutto as it put the military in poor light, until some parts of the report surfaced in Indian media in 2000.

When it was declassified, it showed many failings from the strategic to the tactical levels. It confirmed the looting, rapes and the killings by the Pakistan Army and their local agents. It lay the blame squarely on Pakistani generals, accusing them of debauchery, smuggling, war crimes and neglect of duty. Though no actions were ever taken on commissions findings, the commission had recommended public trial of Pakistan Army generals on the charges that they had been responsible for the situation in the first place and that they had succumbed without a fight.

Simla Agreement

In 1972 the Simla Agreement was signed between India and Pakistan, the treaty ensured that Pakistan recognised the independence of Bangladesh in exchange for the return of the Pakistani POWs. India treated all the POWs in strict accordance with the Geneva Convention, rule 125. It released more than 90,000 Pakistani PoWs in five months.

The accord also gave back more than 13,000 km² of land that Indian troops had seized in West Pakistan during the war, though India retained a few strategic areas. But some in India felt that the treaty had been too lenient to Bhutto, who had pleaded for leniency, arguing that the fragile democracy in Pakistan would crumble if the accord was perceived as being overly harsh by Pakistanis and that he would be accused of losing Kashmir in addition to the loss of East Pakistan.

Indo-Pakistani Naval War of 1971

The **Indo-Pakistani Naval warfare of 1971** were the series of aggressive naval battles fought by the Indian and Pakistani Navy during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. These battles were an integral part of

India-Pakistan War of 1971 and the Pakistan war in Bangladesh. The series of naval operations began by the Indian Navy to exert pressure from the seas while the Indian Army and Indian Air Force moved in to close the ring round East Pakistan from several directions on land. The naval operations incorporated the naval interdiction, air defence, ground support, and logistics missions.

With the success of the Indian Navy's operations in East Pakistan, the Indian Navy commenced two large-scale operations, Operation Trident and Operation Python in the Western front, prior to the start of formal combat between India and Pakistan.

Pakistani Eastern Naval Command

The Eastern Naval Command was established in 1969 and Rear-Admiral Mohammad Shariff (later four-star Admiral) was made its first Flag Officer Commanding. Admiral Shariff administratively ran the Eastern Naval Command, and was credited for leading the administrative operations of Eastern Naval Command. Under his command, SSG(N), Pakistan Marines and SEALs teams were well established, where they had ran both covert and overt operations in Eastern wing.

Having a well-established administrative Naval command, the Pakistan Combatant Forces' GHQ, Headquarter of Pakistan Army, had declined substantial naval contingent for the defence of East Pakistan. The Pakistan Naval Forces had inadequate ships to challenge the Indian Navy on both fronts, and the PAF was unable to protect these ships from both Indian Air Force and the Indian Naval Air Arm. Furthermore, Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan Navy, Vice-Admiral Muzaffar Hassan, had ordered to deploy all of the naval power in Western-Front. Most of the Pakistan Navy's combatant vessels were deployed in West Pakistan while only one destroyer, PNS *Sylhet*, was assigned in East-Pakistan on the personal request of Admiral Shariff.

During the conflict, East Pakistan's naval ports were left defenceless as the Eastern Military Command of Pakistan had decided to fight the war without the navy and faced with a hopeless task against overwhelming odds, the navy planned to remain in the ports when war broke out.

In eastern wing, the Pakistani Navy heavily depended on her gun boat squadron. The Pakistan's Eastern Naval Command was in direct

command of Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) Rear-Admiral Mohammad Shariff who also served as the right-hand of Lieutenant-General Niazi. The Pakistan Navy had 4 gun boats (PNS *Jessore*, *Rajshahi*, *Comilla*, and *Sylhet*). The boats were capable of attaining maximum speed of 20 knots (37 km/h), were crewed by 29 sailors. Known as Pakistan Navy's brown water navy, the gun boats were equipped with various weapons, including heavy machine guns. The boats were adequate for patrolling and led anti-insurgency operations. But they were hopelessly out of place in a conventional warfare.

In the early of April, the Pakistan Navy began naval operations around East-Pakistan to support the Army's executed Operation Searchlight. Rear-Admiral Mohammad Shariff had coordinated all of these projected missions. On 26 April, the Pakistan Navy successfully completed Operation Barisal, but it resulted in the temporary occupation of city of Barisal.

Bloody urban guerrilla warfare ensued and Operation Jackpot severely damaged the operational capability of Pakistan Navy. Before the start of the hostilities, all naval gun boats were stationed at the Chittagong. As the air operations began, the IAF aircraft damaged the *Rajshahi*, while the *Comilla* was sunk on 4 December. On 5 December, the IAF sank two patrol boats in Khulna. The PNS *Sylhet* was destroyed on 6 December and the *Balaghat* on 9 December by Indian aircraft. On 11 December, the PNS *Jessore* was destroyed, while *Rajshahi* was repaired. The *Rajshahi* under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Shikder Hayat managed to evade the Indian blockade and reach Malaysia before the surrender on 16 December.

Naval operations in the Eastern theatre

The Indian Navy started the covert naval operations, which were executed successfully. The Eastern Naval Command of Indian Navy had coordinated, planned, and executed these covert naval operations. In the end months of 1971, the Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command had effectively applied a naval blockade which also completely isolated East-Pakistan's Bay of Bengal, trapping the Eastern Pakistan Navy and eight foreign merchant ships in their ports. The Pakistan Army's Combatant High Command, The GHQ, insisted and pressured Pakistan Navy to deploy PNS Ghazi and to extend its sphere of naval operations,

into East-Pakistan shores. The Officer in Command of Submarine Service Branch of Pakistan Navy opposed the idea of deploying ageing submarine, PNS Ghazi, in the Bay of Bengal. It was difficult to sustain prolonged operations in a distant area, in the total absence of repair, logistic and recreational facilities in the vicinity. At this time, submarine repair facilities were totally absent at Chittagong – the only sea port in the east during this period. Her commander and other officers objected the plan as when it was proposed by the senior Army and Naval officers.

In the Eastern wing of Pakistan, the Navy had never maintained a squadron of warships, despite the calls were made by Eastern Naval Command's Flag Officer Commanding Rear-Admiral Mohammad Shariff. Instead, a brown water navy was formed consisting a gun boats riverine craft on a permanent basis. Consequently, in eastern wing, repair and logistic facilities were not developed at Chittagong. The Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command virtually faced no opposition from Eastern theatre. The aircraft carrier INS *Vikrant*, along with her escort LST ships INS *Guldar*, INS *Gharial*, INS *Magar*, and the submarine INS *Khanderi*, executed their operations independently.

On 4 December 1971, the INS *Vikrant*, the aircraft carrier, was also deployed in which its Hawker Sea Hawk attack aircraft contributed in Air Operations in East Pakistan. The aircraft successfully attacked many coastal towns in East Pakistan including Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar. The continuous attacks later destroyed the PAF's capability to retaliate

The Pakistan Navy responded by deploying her ageing long-range submarine, PNS *Ghazi*, to counter the threat as the Naval Command had overruled the objections by her officers. The PNS *Ghazi*, under the command of Commander Zafar Muhammad Khan, was assigned to locate the INS *Vikrant*, but when it was not able to locate, decided to mine the port of Vishakapatnam – the headquarters of Eastern Naval Command. The Indian Navy's Naval Intelligence laid a trap to sink the submarine by giving fake reports about the aircraft carrier. At around midnight of 3–4 December, the PNS *Ghazi* began its operation of laying mines. The Indian Navy dispatched INS *Rajput* to counter the threat.

The INS *Rajput*'s sonar radar reported the disturbance underwater and two depth charges were released. The deadly game ended when the submarine sank mysteriously while laying a mine with all 92 hands on board around midnight on 3 December 1971 off the Vishakapatnam coast.

The sinking of *Ghazi* turned out to be a major blow and setback for Pakistan Naval operations in East-Pakistan. It diminished the possibilities of carry out the large scale of Pakistan naval operations in Bay of Bengal. It also eliminated further threat possessed by Pakistan Navy to Indian Eastern Naval Command. On reconnaissance mission, the *Ghazi* was ordered to report back to her garrison on 26 November, and admitted a report Naval Combatant Headquarter, NHQ. However, it was failed to return to her garrison. Anxiety grew day by day at the NHQ and NHQ had pressed frantic efforts to establish communications with the submarine failed to produce results. By 3 December prior to starting of the war, the doubts about the fate of submarine had already begun to agitate the commanders at the Naval Headquarter (NHQ).

On 5/6 December 1971, naval air operations were carried out Chittagong, Khulna, and Mangla harbours, and at ships in the Pussur river. The oil installations were destroyed at Chittagong, and the Greek merchant ship *Thetic Charlie* was sunk at the outer anchorage. On 7/8 December, the airfields of PAF were destroyed, and the campaign continued until 9 December. On 12 December, Pakistan Navy laid mines on amphibious landing approaches to Chittagong. This proved a useful trap for some time, and it had denied any direct access to Chittagong port for a long time, even after the instrument of surrender had been signed. The Indian Navy therefore decided to carry out an amphibious landing at Cox Bazar with the aim cutting off the line of re-treat for Pakistan Army troops. On 12 December, additional amphibious battalion was aboard on INS *Vishwa Vijaya* was sailed from Calcutta port. On the night of 15/16 December, the amphibious landing was carried out, immediately after IAF bombardment of the beach a day earlier. After fighting for days, the human cost was very high for Pakistani forces, and no opposition or resistance was offered by Pakistani forces to Indian forces. During this episode Eastern theatre, Indian forces suffered only 2 deaths in the operation. While, Pakistan forces was reported to suffered hundreds death. By the dawn

of 17 December, Indian Navy was free to operate at will in the Bay of Bengal.

Furthermore, the successful Indian Air Operations and Operation Jackpot, led by the Bengali units with the support of Indian Army, undermined the operational capability of Pakistan Navy. Many naval officers (mostly Bengalis) had defected from the Navy and fought against the Pakistan Navy. By the time Pakistan Defences Forces surrendered, the Navy had suffered the most damage as almost all of the gun boats, destroyer (PNS *Sylhet*), and the long-range submarine, PNS *Ghazi*, were lost in the conflict, including their officers.

Mujib Vahini Vs Mukti vahini

Mujib Bahini was formed during the war of liberation. It was mainly composed of activists drawn from the awami league and its student front Chhatra League. It had enlisted about 5000 members who were posted out to four sectors with a 19-member central command. Initially, the sector commanders operated from Barrackpur, Shiliguri, Agartala and Meghalaya of India. Tofail Ahmed, Sirajul Alam Khan, Abdur Razzak and sheikh fazlul haq mani were the central commanders with Moni acting as the commander-in-chief. This force was trained under the direct supervision of Major General Uban of India at Deradun hills.

The mujibnagar government was not said to have been informed about the formation and training programmes of Mujib Bahini. Besides, the Bahini never made formal declaration of allegiance to the Mujibnagar government. So, controversies were created within and outside the Bangladesh government-in-exile regarding the formation of Mujib Bahini. For resolving this dispute, some senior civil and military officials of India like DP Dhar and General Manek Shaw mediated between the Bangladesh government and the Mujib Bahini leaders. The government of India provided the Bahini with one C-4, one N-12 and an old Dakota along with trucks and jeeps.

Many believe that Mujib Bahini was formed to face the emergence of any alternative leadership in the event the liberation war was prolonged. Others think that the leaders of Mujib Bahini created this force because they were not satisfied with the working of Mujibnagar government and were suspicious about the activities of the rightist faction of the Awami League.

In the battlefield, the Mujib Bahini fought shoulder to shoulder with other freedom fighters. It carried out daring raids into the Pakistani occupation army's positions in the south, the south-west and some areas around Dhaka. It was especially trained in guerrilla warfare and was equipped with comparatively better weapons.

The concept of Mujib Bahini appears to have been developed in the middle of 1960s. It remained as an academic theme for a long time within the confines of Dhaka University and among some nationalist intellectuals. It is the core members of the Mujib Bahini who forged the Sarbadaliya Chhatra Sangram Parishad and who enunciated eleven-point programme in 1969. They also led the mass uprising of 1969. It is this group which led the nationalist struggle for independence from 1 March 1971, declared independence on 3 March at Paltan Maidan and organised subsequent preparations for an eventual War of Liberation.

Even as the role of the Indian military in giving birth to the new nation is celebrated, the role of its intelligence services remains largely unknown.

Forty-five minutes before 12.00 pm on December 14, 1971, Indian Air Force pilots at Hashimpara and Gauhati received instructions to attack an unusual target: a sprawling colonial-era building in the middle of Dacca that had no apparent military value whatsoever.

There were nothing but tourist maps available to guide the pilots to their target — but the results were still lethal. The first wave of combat jets, four MiG21 jets armed with rockets, destroyed a conference hall; two more MiGs and two Hunter bombers levelled a third of the main building.

Inside the building — the Government House — East Pakistan's Cabinet had begun an emergency meeting to discuss the political measures to avoid the looming surrender of their army at Dacca 55 minutes before the bombs hit. It turned out to be the last-ever meeting of the Cabinet. A.M. Malik, head of the East Pakistan government, survived the bombing along with his Cabinet — but resigned on the spot, among the burning ruins; the nervous system, as it were, of decision-making had been destroyed.

For years now, military historians have wondered precisely how the Government House was targeted with such precision; rumours

that a spy was present have proliferated. From the still-classified official history of the 1971 war, we now know the answer. Indian cryptanalysts, or code-breakers, had succeeded in breaking Pakistan's military cipher — giving the country's intelligence services real-time information on the enemy's strategic decision-making.

India's Army, Navy and Air Force were lauded, during the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, for their role in ending a genocide and giving birth to a new nation. The enormous strategic contribution of India's intelligence services, however, has gone largely unacknowledged.

Seven months before the December 3 Pakistan Air Force raid that marked the beginning of the war, India's Chief of Army Staff issued a secret order to the General Officer Commanding, Eastern Command, initiating the campaign that would end with the dismemberment of Pakistan.

Operation Instruction 52 formally committed the Indian forces to "assist the Provisional Government of Bangladesh to rally the people of East Bengal in support of the liberation movement," and "to raise, equip and train East Bengal cadres for guerrilla operations for employment in their own native land."

The Eastern Command was to ensure that the guerrilla forces were to work towards "tying down the Pak [Pakistan] Military forces in protective tasks in East Bengal," "sap and corrode the morale of the Pak forces in the Eastern theatre and simultaneously to impair their logistic capability for undertaking any offensive against Assam and West Bengal," and, finally, be used along with the regular Indian troops "in the event of Pakistan initiating hostilities against us."

SECRETARMY

The task of realising these orders fell on Sujan Singh Uban. Brigadier — later Major-General — Uban was an artillery officer who had been handpicked to lead the Special Frontier Force, a secret army set up decades earlier with the assistance of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency to harry the Chinese forces in Tibet. The SFF, which until recently served as a kind of armed wing of India's external covert service, the Research and Analysis Wing, never did fight in China. In Bangladesh, the contributions of its men and officers would be invaluable.

Brigadier Uban — whose enthusiasm for irregular warfare was rivalled, contemporaries recall, only by his eccentric spiritualism — later said he had received a year's advance warning of the task that lay ahead from the Bengali mystic, Baba Onkarnath.

Less-than-holy war

The war he waged, though, was less-than-holy. In July 1971, India's war history records, the first Bangladesh irregulars were infiltrated across the border at Madaripur. This first group of 110 guerrillas destroyed tea gardens, riverboats and railway tracks — acts that tied down troops, undermined East Pakistan's economy and, the history says, destroyed "communications between Dhaka, Comilla and Chittagong." Much of the guerrilla war, however, was waged by the volunteers of the Gano Bahini, a volunteer force. The Indian forces initially set up six camps for recruiting and training volunteers, which were soon swamped. At one camp, some 3,000 young men had to wait up to two months for induction, although the "hygienic condition was pitiable and food and water supply almost non-existent."

By September 1971, though, Indian training operations had expanded dramatically in scale, processing a staggering 20,000 guerrillas each month. Eight Indian soldiers were committed to every 100 trainees at 10 camps. On the eve of the war, at the end of November 1971, over 83,000 Gano Bahini fighters had been trained, 51,000 of whom were operating in East Pakistan — a guerrilla operation perhaps unrivalled in scale until that time. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Brigadier Uban sent in Indian soldiers or, to be more exact, CIA-trained, Indian-funded Tibetans using hastily-imported Bulgarian assault rifles and U.S.-manufactured carbines to obscure their links to India. Fighting under the direct command of RAW's legendary spymaster Rameshwar Kao, Brig. Uban's forces engaged in a series of low-grade border skirmishes. Founded in 1962, the SFF had originally been called Establishment 22 — and still has a road named after it in New Delhi, next to the headquarters of the Defence Ministry. The organisation received extensive special operations training from the U.S., as part of a package of military assistance. In September 1967, the control of these assets was formally handed over to RAW — and used in Bangladesh to lethal effect.

From December 3, 1971, Brig. Uban's force began an extraordinary campaign of sabotage and harassment. At the cost of just 56 dead and 190 wounded, the SFF succeeded in destroying several key bridges, and in ensuring that Pakistan's 97 Independent Brigade and crack 2 Commando Battalion remained bogged down in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Some 580 members of Brig. Uban's covert force were awarded cash, medals and prizes by the Government of India.

November 1971 saw the Indian-backed low-intensity war in East Pakistan escalate to levels Pakistan found intolerable — pushing it to act. On December 3, Pakistan attempted to relieve the pressure on its eastern wing by carrying out strikes on major Indian airbases. India retaliated with an offensive of extraordinary speed that has been described as a "blitzkrieg without tanks."

Rejecting an offer for conditional surrender in the East, the Indian forces entered Dacca on December 15. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi promptly ordered a ceasefire on the western front as well: "if I don't do so today," she said of the decision to end the war, "I shall not be able to do so tomorrow."

How important was the covert war to this victory, and what cost did it come at?

India's new communications intelligence technologies were clearly critical; three decades on, the government would be advised to make fuller accounts public, and publicly honour the anonymous cryptanalysts who achieved so much.

The 1971 war history records that their efforts meant "several important communications and projections of the Pak[istani] high command were intercepted, decoded and suitable action [was] taken." Indian communications interception, the history states, even prevented a last-minute effort to evacuate the Pakistani troops from Dacca, using five disguised merchant ships.

The role of irregular forces, though, needs a more nuanced assessment. There is no doubt that they served to tie down Pakistani troops, and derail their logistical backbone. They were also, however, responsible for large-scale human rights abuses targeting Pakistani sympathisers and the ethnic Bihari population. There is no moral equivalence between these crimes and those of the Pakistani armed

forces in 1971 — but the fact also is that the irregular forces bequeathed to Bangladesh a militarised political culture that would have deadly consequences of its own.

India's secret war in Bangladesh would have served little purpose without a conventional, disciplined military force to secure a decisive victory — a lesson of the utility and limitations of sub-conventional warfare that ought to be closely studied today by the several states that rely on these tactics

In Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan), in March, 1971, excepting a few Pakistan-minded men and their agents, all the people were unanimous in demanding freedom. There was no infighting among them. Sadly, it was not the same case among those who were at the forefront of the leadership of the fighting country - the Awami League, especially its leaders. There was hardly any unanimity among them. There were serious differences of opinions and perspectives in the leadership about how the future Bangladesh should look politically and who should control its administration. The Awami leadership may be said to have been deeply faction-ridden. Some time ago a retired Indian Major General, S. S. Uban, wrote a book entitled *Phantoms of Chittagong Fifth Army in Bangladesh*. In that book there is a chapter where Uban has given us some details about those infightings and dissensions. Here we can see a distinct difference between the people and the leadership. The common men of the country had not even an inkling of what was going on among their leaders. I think I should make it clear that Uban had the sympathy and support for a chief faction in the infighting = the Mujib Bahini. And he has written his book from their perspective. Yet, if we look at it objectively, we may find some useful and factual information about the events.

Major General Uban starts the relevant chapter like this: 'Colonel M. A. G. Osmany was the temporary Chief of Staff of the Bangladesh army and, as such, also the head of the freedom fighters. He used to advise the provisional Bangladesh government on the training of the freedom fighters and the arrangements that should be made for their deployment against the Pakistani military authorities. Later, when the Indian government decided to aid the freedom fighters in their training, Colonel Osmany used to have communication with J. S. Aurora, Lieutenant General and G. O. C. of the Eastern Command.

Needless to say, those events took place after the provisional government for independent Bangladesh was installed in Mujibnagar on the 10th of April.

Uban complains that the selection procedure of the freedom fighters was not rational and fool-proof. He writes, 'Young men had been coming in their thousands at this time to have training, but there was no satisfactory procedure to find out the sincerity and motive of all those who were coming for the purpose of training. For this the training camps had to depend on the certificates given by the National Assembly members (MNA) appointed by the provisional government about the sincerity of the trainees. MNAs used to issue the certificates, blindly based on the list prepared by the Bengali officers, but some of these trainees had a future political motive. As a result, a few groups vanished with their weapons into the deep interior of Bangladesh, while some others would return after hiding their weapons and report that the weapons had been captured and gone out from their hands. To put an end to these unhappy activities, a foolproof solution was put forward, but the senior officials did not accept it, because, being in higher positions, they considered their knowledge to be superior too.'

At this time the four vanguards of the Mujib Bahini appeared on the scene. They availed themselves of the full opportunity of the circumstances and tried to turn the events to their advantage. This is how Uban introduced those leaders to us: 'During this noisy time we came into contact with some dedicated young leaders who had been well-known in Bangladesh. They were Sheikh Fazlul Hoque Moni, Tofael Ahmed, Sirajul Alam Khan and Abdur Razzaque.' Uban had very high regard for them. According to him 'their do-or-die promise appeared to be rooted in the heart'. And it seemed to Uban without any doubt that their leadership was acceptable to the freedom fighters both inside and outside Bangladesh. The government wanted them to be trained under the leadership of the freedom fighters and then get them down to the battlefield. The four young leaders, however, did not want it at all. 'Because of their single-minded loyalty to Mujib and their closeness to him, they were more eager to be known as the Mujib Bahini. They had been issuing certificates of genuineness, selecting from their old colleagues. Choosing enough sacrificing, upright and faithful men from Bangladesh, they were

putting pressure that they should receive unconventional training in fighting techniques unlike the commando training received by members of the Mukti Bahini. Perhaps they wanted to give leadership to such a political party which has its organisational branches in each town, thana and tehsil.'

The real thing is clear here. The young leaders wanted political leadership. And the infighting was for this leadership. But these dissensions and infightings did not erop up in a single day. They had been going on for quite some time. It does not appear that Uban was acquainted with the whole thing. The tussle between the Mujibists and the anti-Mujibists among the Awamis had reached by then reached a critical state. Mujib himself was absent during the whole period of the Liberation War, and his family was interned in a Dhanmondi house, having official subsistence, as would be the case under the circumstances.) And it was his considered political decision not to be around. He surrendered to the Pakistan army on 25/26 March without any fight and courted arrest most willingly. The argument that is put forward in his defence is that if he had not surrender the way he did, the Pakistanis would have killed many more men in their search for him. The question arises how far this argument is valid. According to Sheikh Mujib himself and other Awami leaders, three million men, women and children lost their lives at the hands of the occupying Pakistani forces.

How many more would have died if Mujib had not surrendered? The Awamis have given us no account of this nor have we got it from any other source.

Let us now come back to our original subject of discussion 'Mujib Bahini vs. Mukti Bahini'. Even though Mujib himself was not present among the freedom fighters, his devoted and worthy disciples were there. Sheikh Fazlul Hoque Moni, Sirajul Alam Khan, Abdur Razzaque and Tofael Ahmed were unflinching Mujibists. Tajuddin, on the other hand, was different and the four young leaders knew it. And, that is why they had no confidence in him. They considered Tajuddin to be Mujib's rival. Even Mujib started thinking like that - especially after the birth of Bangladesh. Consequently, he removed Tajuddin from his Cabinet at the first opportunity. For this his excuse was 'Tajuddin's attachment for India'. But the real reason was different. Sheikh Mujib, the leader, who was an absentee during the

Liberation War, was finding it difficult to face Tajuddin who had worked in the fields, bazaars and ghats during the period of the war. The freedom fighters knew co-fighter Tajuddin directly, and not Sheikh Mujib. That is why Mujib had little faith in the first Bangladesh army composed of freedom fighters. And so he created and placed the Rakkhi Bahini over the military institution's head. He promoted one or two of his faithful favourites in the army without caring for the rules of seniority. The result was that dissatisfaction became manifest in the army.

The four young leaders of the Mujib Bahini took up absentee Mujib's cudgel in the battlefield in 1971. They not only opposed Tajuddin, they were opposed to Osmany, Commander-in-Chief of the Mukti Bahini, as well. They also did not have a high opinion of the provisional government-in-exile because Tajuddin headed it. Rather, the four leaders had regard for Syed Nazrul Islam, the acting President, standing in for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The four young leaders did not like the fact that Tajuddin and his government were maintaining a good relationship with the Indian government and with Aurora, the General appointed by the government of India. Uban has written about this: 'The young leaders were always complaining that General Aurora had a special type of collusion with Tajuddin as both of them were putting pressure so that the Mujib Bahini came under their command and was directed by them, and did not remain under the young leaders who were disloyal to Tajuddin.' Uban further says, 'I tried my best to dispel this misunderstanding, but as it was rooted deep in the past, the old attitudes could not be put right and nothing of consequence happened.'

The young leaders were not, however, the type of men who would remain inactive and silent. They were carrying on with their job. In the words of Uban: 'In some way or other, the young leaders might have influenced the elderly MNAs and MPs and started the propaganda that the post of the Prime Minister had gone to the wrong man. According to them the post should have gone to somebody else. I think they had in mind Syed Nazrul Islam when they were saying it. The matter might take an ugly turn as the young leaders were almost mad to show Tajuddin his proper place. At this stage any break-up in the provisional government could be disastrous for the whole movement. I think I was able to make the young leaders understand

that any such step would be dangerously risky for their mission and might even bring more fatal consequences during the independence and post-independence days of Bangladesh. Fortunately, they agreed with me though they had been roasting Tajuddin within themselves which, except for a few persons like me, no one else knew. I think Syed Nazrul Islam also warned them against it and that is how it was possible to get over a fatal political threat.'

One cannot but be dumbfounded at those happenings in the most critical days of the country how the freedom flag-carrying Awami League leaders were indulging in infighting and conspiracy among themselves when thousands were losing their lives at the hands of the Pakistani killers and hundreds of sisters and mothers were being violated! Was that patriotism?

Awami League, especially the Mujibists among them, used to think that the communists 'especially the pro-Chinese ones' were bigger enemies than the Pakistanis. About this Uban says, 'These four leaders inform us that many undesirable persons similar to the Naxalites are making inroads (into the Mukti Bahini) in Bangladesh and are getting training and weapons. They warn that these weapons will not be used against the Pakistanis; rather, they are being hidden in Bangladesh so that they can be used after independence in support of movements similar to the Naxalite one. In fact, they mention the names of the pro-Chinese communist leaders who are connected to some army officials of Bangladesh and through whose approval a large number of communist cadres were being recruited and trained and armed with weapons. The matter was brought to the notice of the authorities confidentially, but the result was nil.' Perhaps, like Uban, the four young leaders were also disappointed at this. One may feel a little surprised at the whole thing, because neither Tajuddin and his government nor the Indian government considered the communists to be their allies. So, one doubts the truth of the information supplied by the Mujibist leaders. Moreover, why cannot the communists, other than the Muscovite puppets, be patriots?

Let us now come to what the provisional government of Bangladesh thought about the Mujib Bahini. About this Uban writes, 'The provisional government of Bangladesh'

which meant Tajuddin ? never did agree with the leaders of the Mujib Bahini and took all their complaints lightly. Colonel Osmany accepted directives from his government and, though outwardly friendly to the young leaders, he did not like that there ought to be a separate force in the name of Mujib Bahini 'especially because that force which would not be under his overall command. General Aurora of the Eastern Command, who was appointed to direct the total operation, was unhappy about the thing as Mujib Bahini was not directly under his command. It seems the relationship between the two factions of the Awami League was like that of the snake and mongoose and that also during the Liberation War.'

A new dimension regarding the communist terror was added to the minds of the young leaders from another direction. 'The young leaders have seen Bangladesh's Naxalite men gossiping with the Indian officials in an aristocratic hotel of India. Perhaps the Naxalites lived in such hotels. The young leaders knew that during military rule in East Pakistan those people had been their worst enemies. It was originally against them that the youth organisation of the Awami League was established. The young leaders failed to understand why India was partial towards their identified enemy. So they mistakenly concluded that the goal of our government was to enable a communist party to stand on solid ground in Bangladesh. They also came to know through a reliable source that the Marxist workers and Moulana Bhasani's followers were getting separate training and weapons.' The young leaders saw Uban and, expressing their anger, told him, 'We never expected you to train the Marxists and Naxalites and give them weapons to nullify what we have achieved in the last 25 years.'

Getting annoyed at what the young leaders said, Uban went to meet Secretary Kao to verify the truth. Kao told him, in the words of Uban, 'Moulana Bhasani's Naxalites are getting their training in a different venue. They had not been put in my custody, because he was certain I would not keep any such promise and the young leaders would very soon find out where those trainees were. This would cause a very serious disturbance.' Uban was astonished at Kao's reply. He was not prepared for this discovery. Kao further said to him, 'We have done nothing against the wishes of the provisional government of Bangladesh and they think Bhasani's men are a very valuable resource against the Pakistanis. How can we disregard their advice?

Tell your young leaders that even if they do not like it they have to swallow it. In the overall planning we will support them only as a key branch, but not as an entity possessing an independent political leadership. We cannot do anything if they do not walk on the right path. Let them go to the dogs.'

The Mujibist leaders became more careful after this. 'They would not divulge their secrets to the key personnel of their government - not even to the Prime Minister Tajuddin. They suspected that Tajuddin would capture power for himself after ousting Sheikh Mujib. They then told me sincerely, "Tajuddin is in union with D. P. Dhar, your communist minister. We do not trust either of them. Even your government do not know what plans they have about Bangladesh after the country's independence." The young leaders did not trust the provisional government or anyone connected with the government'. Uban informs us, 'They would not divulge any information even to Colonel Osmany, who had been working closely with Tajuddin, nor even to Lieutenant General Aurora who, they suspected, was acting as their political adversary for some unaccountable reasons. They would often tell me that General Aurora had been instigating Tajuddin to meet Indira Gandhi and putting pressure so that Mujib Bahini came under his command.'

There was also a big problem about the name Mujib Bahini. Neither the government-in-exile nor the military High Command was supporting this name. At that time, seizing an opportunity, the young leaders put forward the name of Mujib Bahini otherwise christened as the Bengal Liberation Force (BLF). While the Mukti Bahini was fighting splendidly on the border and inside Bangladesh, the Mujib Bahini, so-called, was in reserve in their Dehradun camp by the Indian faction of the Indian Army ostensibly with the nod from Delhi's political bosses.

But Mujib Bahani, which has no record of fighting during the entire period of armed struggle excepting trying to impose them as the political commissars, that was unacceptable to the regularly-constituted Mukti Bahini and the Guerrilla force, christened as the Bangladesh Defence Forces (BDF), maintained its entity with the informal sanction of the Indian Intelligence and General Uban. Mujib Bahini. It was not acceptable to the High Command when Uban proposed the name of the special force as Mujib Bahini. According to them, a doubt might be created in the minds of the people inside

Bangladesh, and there might even be friction between the Mukti and Mujib bahinis. The young leaders did not agree to accept this decision of the High Command. They said, 'Let others say what they like, these boys will be known as Mujib Bahini inside Bangladesh.'

Following this arose the question of how the operational work would be shared between the two bahinis. General Aurora solved the problem. This is how he divided the responsibilities. Mukti Bahini would be responsible for up to 20 miles inside the border and the Mujib Bahini would be in charge of further interior regions inside the country. The young leaders also wanted this and so there were no differences there. Aurora, however, wanted the Mujib Bahini to work under his command, but they were not accepting it. Another problem cropped up with regard to the operational work. Another decision was needed in the matter relating to the method of infiltration after crossing the border and the army and the Mukti Bahini had been in charge of that.

The Indian army established wide corridors including safe houses all around Bangladesh and the boys of the Mukti Bahini did prepare an outstanding line of communication as far as the villages through their well-established networks. Uban informs us, 'Lieutenant General Aurora used to pressure my boys to find out the routes they used, their entry-route on the border, and about the safe houses they used and their destinations. The young leaders had no problem to divulge their entry-routes on the border so that the army units were vigilant to allow them to infiltrate. But they were not willing to divulge any information about their corridors, safe houses and destinations. This was because they doubted the sincerity of many Mukti Bahini leaders who had been their political enemies.'

Thus we see how the game of clashes being played between the Mujib Bahini and Mukti Bahini, between Mujib and Tajuddin and between the Awami League and the Awami League! And the country of Bangladesh and its people had to suffer for it.

At last, after a great effort, things were made agreeable to them for a peaceful solution. The solution was they would only inform the local army commanders who would allow them to enter their entry-routes.

Major General Uban was a supporter of the Mukti Bahini, sympathetic to the Mujibists and an admirer of the four young leaders.

Yet we are in a position to know from his writings some of evidences of power struggle and the divisive and the autonomous role of an ideological elite force, so called, that never fought the war but merely kept in reserve for Mujibist take-over in the absence of Mujib, if it had come that after December 16, 1971. The infightings of the party continued even after the birth of the country and in a very ugly manner.

Uban ends the relevant chapter of his in the following words: 'Bangladesh is now free. Under the sacrificing Prime Minister Tajuddin, the provisional government has started the work in full swing. The new government of Bangladesh has directed the return of all illegal weapons and the very first of those who were told to do it were the boys of the Mujib Bahini. Sheikh Moni was furious about this.'

He made a definite complaint to me about the dicta adopted by Tajuddin. Among them were his staying in power and preparing a leftist force. He even showed me a group of armed communist youths in the corridors of the Hotel Intercontinental who had black bands tied around their foreheads.

'I was a witness to a hot debate between Sheikh Moni and Shree D. P. Dhar in connection with the surrender of weapons. Moni told Shree Dhar they would not surrender their weapons before Sheikh's arrival in Dhaka and, if necessary, they would wage a civil war' Moni later said to me that his observation hitherto has confirmed that Shree Dhar was a sworn enemy of his country.'

Mujibists became much more powerful after Sheikh returned to Dhaka on the 10th of January, 1972. Tajuddin was expelled from the Cabinet. Osmany left the Bangladesh army. Sheikh Mujib started to rule the country with the help of his devoted and enthusiastic disciples and the three bahinis the Rakshi Bahini, Sheikh Moni's Juba League and labour leader Mannan's Lal Bahini. The power of the police and the army was curbed, because the government had little faith in them. A reign of terror was unleashed in Bangladesh.

The ruling Awami League party and its factions 'and nobody else' were chiefly responsible for the anarchy and terrorist activities that pervaded Bangladesh in its first three years. The people of Bangladesh were deprived of the peace and security which they had hoped for in an independent country in what was the killing fields of Bangladesh during the Pakistan Military's occupation.

1971 Mukti Bahini war documents lost

The worst traitors were the one's who screwed up and inturn planted the seeds of turmoil which bloomed to become the Muktibehanain. The Indians simply took advantage of it all. Sure it sucks they meddled in and took advantage and in turn defeated Pakistan; but that's the nature of the game. You leave your defense open and someone will come around to take advantage of it. The truth of the matter is it should NOT have reached the tipping point. In every discussion you talk double talk, you say muktis were the product of turmoil seeded by traitors, you fail to mention the traitors names, Muktis were being trained by our arch enemy for years, you do not want to mention the name of India, it shows who your sympathies are with, on the other hand you mention hadith of our prophet S.A.A.S. and in that hadith you talk about our prophet saying negative things about women, very sad. your style is that of a person who has no scruples and will negative about every thing except India, in each and every post that you answer in this forum. You are classic case of negativity. You say that we should respect and live like neighbors with India but on this one you talk about Muktis with our pointing the real culprit and that is India, did India act as neighbor, never, so I believe either you are an Indian acting like a Pakistan or you are a RAW agent, who never puts the blame when it comes to India. Most of these problems are all home grown Pakistani problems. It's nice and relaxing to declare that somebody from Outside messed it all up for us and we are blameless; but that's not how I operate. I mentioned in my post that Yes India took advantage. But India's role is a symptom and/or Progression of the disease, not **THE** disease itself. You want me to treat the symptom.

We have traitors who are bent on following the agenda set by others, it is like yourself, corruption is everywhere, last four mayors of Montreal have been fired for corruption, one billion dollars without gas plants in Ontario disappeared without plants by liberal Party, Most of the money in swiss banks is the money deposited is stolen from countries like Philipppines, Pakistan etc., so don't talk about corruption.

Pakistan got on board for wot thinking that siding with our friends would be the thing to do, along the way Pakistan gave more sacrifices than anyone else, other instead of looking at it in a sensible way dump

on Pakistan, it is like you who has grudge against Pakistan by singling out Pakistan and do not see the real world where corruption is the way. so go and learn some facts and than stop singling out Pakistan, see the Pakistan, who is been victimized by even our neighbors. Pakistan is resilliant country and it will survive. Insha Allah.

you cannot and should not call your self Pakistani because you talk like an adversary of Pakistan, so your right to call yourself Pakistani is revoked because of your stance against Pakistan in each an every post and because your siding with arch enemy of Pakistan, you better call yourself Indian,.

AN UNTOLD STORY OF 1971 INDO-PAK WAR

THERE is much for Pakistan to come to terms with what happened in 1971. But the answers don't lie in unthinking vilification of the fighting men who performed so well in the war against such heavy odds in defense of the national policy. Rather, in failing to honour them, the nation dishonours itself.

My introduction to international politics was 1971, as a schoolgirl in Calcutta. Many images from that year are still etched in my mind, but the culminating one was the photo on Ramna racecourse of two men sitting at a table — the smart, turbaned Sikh, 'our' war-hero, Jagjit Singh Aurora, and the large man in a beret, A A K Niazi, commander of the other side, signing the instrument of surrender. Nearly a generation later, a chance interview for the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) with Lt Gen. Aurora took me back to 1971. The interview was not about 1971, but about injustices suffered by Sikhs at the hands of the state General Aurora had served. I thought he was a bigger hero for what he had to say then. That view was reinforced as I read — with incredulity — the disparaging remarks by other Indian officers about him, and each other, in their books. If this is what happened to the winning commander, I wondered what had happened to the other man in the photo.

The result was a revelation.

It turns out that General Niazi has been my 'enemy' since the Second World War. As Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army fought on the Burma front in 1943-45 in their quest

for India's freedom, Niazi was fighting on the other side, for the British Indian Army, under the overall command of General (later Field Marshal) William Joseph Slim. Slim and his 14th Army halted the advance of the INA and the Japanese at the Imphal campaign and turned the course of the war.

In the process of inflicting military defeat upon my ancestor, **Niazi's performance was so exceptional that the British awarded him an on-the-spot Military Cross for action on the Assam-Burma front in June 1944. On another occasion they wanted to award a DSO, but he was too junior, so a Mention in Despatches was recorded.** In the original record of his MC signed by his commanding officers all the way up to Slim, which I obtained from the British Ministry of Defence, the British commanders describe Niazi's gallantry in detail: "He organized the attack with such skill that his leading platoon succeeded in achieving complete surprise over the enemy." They speak of how he personally led his men, the 'great skill and coolness' under fire with which he changed tactics with changing circumstances, created diversionary attacks, extricated his wounded, defeated the enemy and withdrew his men by section, remaining personally at the rear in every case.

The British honoured Niazi for "personal leadership, bravery and complete disregard for his own personal safety." On 15 December 1944 the Viceroy Lord Wavell flew to Imphal and in the presence of Lord Mountbatten knighted Slim and his corps commanders Stopford, Scoones and Christison. **Only two 'Indian' officers were chosen to be decorated by the Viceroy at that ceremony — 'Tiger' Niazi was one of them. In 1971 Niazi was a highly decorated Pakistani general, twice receiving the Hilal-e-Jurat. He was sent to East Pakistan in April 1971 — part of a sorry tradition in South Asia of political rulers attempting to find military solutions to political problems. By then Tikka Khan had already launched the crackdown of 25 March for which he has been known to Bengalis as the 'butcher of Bengal' ever since. The population of East Bengal was completely hostile and Pakistan condemned around the world.**

Authoritative scholarly analyses of 1971 are rare. The best work is Richard Sisson and Leo Rose's *War and Secession*. Robert Jackson,

fellow of All Soul's College, Oxford, wrote an account shortly after the events. Most of the principal participants did not write about it, a notable exception being Gen. Niazi's recent memoirs (1998). Some Indian officers have written books of uneven quality — they make for an embarrassing read for what the Indians have to say about one another.

However, a consistent picture emerges from the more objective accounts of the war. Sisson and Rose describe how India started assisting Bengali rebels since April, but “the Mukti Bahini had not been able to prevent the Pakistani army from regaining control over all the major urban centers on the East Pakistani-Indian border and even establishing a tenuous authority in most of the rural areas.” From July to October there was direct involvement of Indian military personnel. “

mid-October to 20 November... Indian artillery was used much more extensively in support ...and Indian military forces, including tanks and air power on a few occasions, were also used... Indian units were withdrawn to Indian territory once their objectives had been brought under the control of the Mukti Bahini — though at times this was only for short periods, as, to the irritation of the Indians, the Mukti Bahini forces rarely held their ground when the Pakistani army launched a counterattack.”

Clearly, the Pakistani army regained East Pakistan for their masters in Islamabad by April-May, creating an opportunity for a political settlement, and held off both Bengali guerrillas and their Indian supporters till November, buying more time — time and opportunity that Pakistan's rulers and politicians failed to utilise. Contrary to Indian reports, full-scale war between India and Pakistan started in East Bengal on 21 November, making it a four-week war rather than a ‘lightning campaign’. Sisson and Rose state bluntly: “After the night of 21 November... Indian forces did not withdraw. From 21 to 25 November several Indian army divisions... launched simultaneous military actions on all of the key border regions of East Pakistan, and from all directions, with both armored and air support.” Indian officers like Sukhwant Singh and Lachhman Singh write quite openly in their books about India invading East Pakistani territory in November, which they knew was ‘an act of war’.

None of the outside scholars expected the Eastern garrison to withstand a full Indian invasion. On the contrary, Pakistan's longstanding strategy was "the defense of the east is in the west". Jackson writes, "Pakistani forces had largely withdrawn from scattered border-protection duties into cleverly fortified defensive positions at the major centres inside the frontiers, where they held all the major 'place names' against Mukti Bahini attacks, and blocked the routes of entry from India..."

Sisson and Rose point out the incongruity of Islamabad tolerating India's invasion of East Pakistani territory in November. On 30 November Niazi received a message from General Hamid stating, "The whole nation is proud of you and you have their full support." The same day Islamabad decided to launch an attack in the West on 2 December, later postponed to 3 December, after a two-week wait, but did not inform the Eastern command about it. According to Jackson, the Western offensive was frustrated by 10 December.

Though futile, the Western offensive allowed India to openly invade the East, with overwhelming advantages. "...despite all these advantages, the war did not go as smoothly and easily for the Indian army...", but Sisson and Rose come to the balanced judgment that "The Pakistanis fought hard and well; the Indian army won an impressive victory." Even Indian officers concede the personal bravery of Niazi and the spirited fight put up by the Pakistanis in the East. That the troops fought so well against such overwhelming odds is a credit both to them, and to their commanders, for an army does not fight well in the absence of good leadership.

However, as Jackson put it, "...India's success was inevitable from the moment the general war broke out — unless diplomatic intervention could frustrate it." As is well known, Pakistan failed to secure military or diplomatic intervention. Sisson and Rose also say, "The outcome of the conflict on the eastern front after 6 December was not in doubt, as the Indian military had all the advantages." On 14 December Niazi received the following message from Yahya Khan: "You have fought a heroic battle against overwhelming odds. The nation is proud of you ... You have now reached a stage where further resistance is no longer humanly possible nor will it serve any useful purpose... You should now take all necessary measures to stop the

fighting and preserve the lives of armed forces personnel, all those from West Pakistan and all loyal elements..." Sisson and Rose naturally describe this message as "implying that the armed forces in East Pakistan should surrender".

conflict, nor were they responsible for the failure of the political and diplomatic process. Sent to do the dirty work of the political manoeuvrers, the fighting men seem to have performed remarkably well against overwhelming No matter how traumatic the outcome of 1971 for Pakistan, the Eastern command did not create the odds. It is shocking therefore to discover that they were not received with honour by their nation on their return. Their commander, Niazi, appears to have been singled out, along with one aide, to be punished arbitrarily with dismissal and denial of pension, without being given the basic right to defend himself through a court-martial, which he asked for.

The commission set up allegedly to examine what had happened in 1971 was too flawed in its terms of reference and report to have any international credibility. However, even its recommendations of holding public trials and courtmartials were ignored. There is much for Pakistan to come to terms with what happened in 1971. But the answers don't lie in unthinking vilification of the fighting men who performed so well in the war against such heavy odds in defence of the national policy. Rather, in failing to honour them, the nation dishonours itself.

INDIAN SUPPORT OF MUKTHI VAHINI GUERRILS

The Indians are likely to confine their actions to expressions of sympathy for and perhaps support to East Bengalis. They will watch closely for signs as to the strength and prospects for success on the part of East dissidents. If the evidence indicates to the Indians that the East Bengal independence movement has reasonably good prospects for success, the GOI may do any of several things: tolerate privately provided cross-border assistance to the East Bengalis. This assistance could range from propaganda support to weapons and explosives; permit East Bengal dissidents to use India as a refuge and to conduct cross-border activities from within India; covertly provide supplies, including weapons, and perhaps some training, to East Bengal dissidents. Indian Reaction to Pakistan Events, Mar. 29, 1971

Shahi displayed concern over evolution of events in East Pakistan and thought competing communist elements from India could set off armed struggle between left and right forces in East Bengal which could overshadow current hostilities between separatists and army. Pakistan PERMREP Protests Indian Interference, Apr. 9, 1971

Pakistan High Commissioner told Ambassador today that Pakistan and India on verge of war. ... He claimed 3,000 Indians armed with regulation Indian Army equipment either killed or captured by Pakistani troops in East Pakistan. Conversation with Pakistan High Commissioner, April 30, 1971

In addition to its concern about the refugee problem, the GOI has been taking steps to support the Bengali struggle for independence in the face of the military successes of the Pakistan Army. The BSF has established camps at which 10,000 Bengalis are reportedly receiving training in guerrilla and sabotage tactics. Limited quantities of arms and ammunition continue to be provided to the Bengali separatists and some Indian forces have infiltrated into East Bengal to provide assistance and training to the separatists. ... [W]e have learned from intelligence sources that China may have given a conditional promise to assist Pakistan in the event hostilities break out with India. The Chinese may have also given assurances that they will initiate military action "along the Tibetan border" if Indian troops deliberately cross the Pakistani border in force. Should the Chinese become directly involved, it is likely that the Soviet Union will openly support India and will presumably provide such military assistance as required. Contingency Study for Indo-Pakistan Hostilities, May 25, 1971

For some time now India has been systematically interfering in internal affairs of Pakistan with clear aim of jeopardizing Pakistan's territorial integrity. India has sent armed infiltrators into East Pakistan to create disturbances and to help anti-state elements. She has circulated false and highly distorted and tendentious accounts of events in East Pakistan through government-controlled radio and press. She has not only provided shelter to anti-state elements on her soil but has also persistently allowed so-called members of "Bangla Desh Government" to use her radio and other mass media to stir up rebellion against legitimate government of country. Pakistan Protest Note to India, May 26, 1971

We have pursued three courses with regard to the Indians. First, since the refugee burden seems to be India's major problem now, we have taken a number of steps to encourage India to manage this problem by getting international assistance rather than by taking direct action against East Pakistan as some Indians are urging. Partly because of our actions U Thant is getting an effective international assistance program underway. We are already helping and will be stepping up our assistance. Second, we have taken up with the Indians their cross-border support to guerrillas and have privately cautioned them against direct action. Third, in order to persuade the Indians that a solution to the East Pakistan problem can be achieved without their direct military intervention, we have confidentially briefed them on the positions we are taking privately with Pakistan. Possible India-Pakistan War, May 26, 1971

Following based on Corr's personal observations and discussions with M.A.K. Chaudhry, Inspector General Police (IGP), East Pakistan, formerly IGP North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Joint Embassy-USAID Message, June 25, 1971

Choudhury admitted that attacks by Mukti Bahini forces against police stations in rural areas seemed to be continuing at a high level but asserted that at least now police were fighting back rather than dropping their rifles and running. ... Referring to Dacca, he said bombings and sabotage were a major headache for his forces. Recalling press item three days ago announcing capture of young Bengali carrying explosives, IG said man was part of three man team designated to disrupt SSC (matriculation) examinations. He said young man was found with impressive supply of grenades and other explosive devices, all with Indian markings. Man admitted to membership BM and to having been trained at Argatala before undertaking mission. Status of East Pak Police, July 23, 1971

Two successive batches of insurgents have now completed training in India and have boosted number and quality of infiltrators. Number of Mukti Bahini have received training at Dehra Dun and been commissioned as officers. Additional numbers are now in training at various Indian centers. Meanwhile extremist elements including Naxalites have taken advantage of opportunity to step up their own activity, on the other hand, Hamid said, Mukti Bahini are not so successful as they would like to have people believe. Conversation with Pak Army Chief of Staff: East Pak Situation, Aug. 11, 1971

Acting Secretary Johnson called in Indian Ambassador Jha August 23 to discuss USG concerns about reports of GOI intention to step up its support to Mukti Bahini and to express USG hope that GOI could use its influence with Mukti Bahini to discourage and prevent attacks on relief facilities and personnel in East Pakistan. Jha in response indicated historical tradition of anarchic violence in Bengal and physical and political difficulties which GOI would face if it tried disarm guerrillas. Jha stressed dangers of radicalization of Mukti Bahini. Indian Support to Mukti Bahini, Aug. 12, 1971

During Hilaly's call on Cisco August 13, Hilaly raised question of role Senator Church and his office playing on behalf of Bangla Desh Movement. Hilaly's Call on Sisco, Aug. 14, 1971

Primary problem is not cross-border activity by Paks but rather by Indians, including vital support they are giving to Mukti Bahini. We believe problem of potential serious cross-border action by Paks would be easily eliminated if India halted its own support for military operation within East Pakistan. Indo-Pak Escalation, August 20, 1971

Three months ago East Bengali leftist parties sought the formation of a United Front Government. They were then rebuffed by the Awami League, which asserted that its sweeping victory in East Bengal in the December 1970 general elections conferred on it a mandate as exclusive representative of the people of East Bengal. The creation of the council is thus a major shift in the Awami League's stance. Some sources believe that the council was formed as a result of pressure from leftists within the Mukhti Bahini; since the "liberation force" appears to have drawn heavily on students, it is very likely that it has a higher than average complement of leftists. Moreover, the Mukhti Bahini runs the day-to-day risks in the struggle against the Pakistan Government and now has more immediate contact with the people of East Bengal than the BDG, whose members are in India. Thus, the Mukhti Bahini might have been able to convince the Awami League of the need to broaden the BDG's base. Bangla Desh: A "National Liberation Front" Emerging? Sept. 21, 1971. Serious concern over Indian military deployments, strengths, and intentions was expressed during Sep 30 briefing of Congressman Frelinghuysen by Major General Jilani, Director General, Inter Services Intelligence, and his staff. ... They also portrayed 69 Indian-sponsored insurgent training camps bordering

East Pakistan, with an estimated total of 30 – 50 thousand rebels in training. Pak Military Intelligence Briefing for Congressman Frelinghuysen, Oct. 1, 1971

Although India had not started the crisis, it was, for reasons of its own, supporting guerrilla activity in East Pakistan, even though this was denied. Memorandum of Conversation with Foreign Secretary Douglas-Home (Great Britain), Oct. 3, 1971

Sir Terence asked about US representations to India on latter's aid to Mukti Bahini. I replied that GOI position is that it gives sympathy and support, as demanded by Parliament, to members of Mukti Bahini who enter India and then go back with or without arms. GOI makes clear it will not stop this support. However, GOI will not admit that it is supporting training camps for Mukti Bahini on Indian soil, despite ample evidence to contrary. I expressed doubt regular Indian Army units or personnel are participating in military activity in East Pakistan, though some Indian Bengalis might be involved. Sir Terence noted incidence of shooting, including artillery, across the border. I speculated that if Paks retaliate it will probably be in Kashmir in order to seize territory for bargaining purposes. War or Peace in South Asia, October 7, 1971

We now have specific report (Calcutta 2605 – protect source) to effect that Mukti Bahini plans to inject as many as 40,000 armed men across border by October 15, with additional 20,000 to follow by end October. This action reportedly would be accomplished with support diversionary actions by Indian Army to keep Pak Armed Forces off balance while infiltration took place. We are not convinced that intensified guerrilla activity will achieve results compatible with India's interests. Risks of War in Indo-Pak Confrontation, Oct. 7, 1971

Oct 8 press reported 79 Indian agents eliminated the previous day in two separate actions in Rangpur District. First action in which 44 were claimed killed occurred mile and a half outside Pakistan territory near Daikhata. In second action, north of Lalmanirhat, 35 infiltrators were reportedly killed. In both cases, large quantities of ammunition, including machine guns, grenades and explosives claimed captured. Comment: Press reports of Indian agents and/or infiltrators killed this week now totals 136.

Status of insurgency: In Dacca 2733 we suggested two chief unknowns this situation were: (1) whether population of province had will continue support [sic] MB in face of difficulties and reprisals and (2) whether MB would be able organize itself for long guerrilla struggle. In past two months we have gathered some evidence on both points: (A) On question of popular support our impression is that urban bourgeoisie showing some signs weariness. People in this class hate West Pakistan as much as in April and May but some beginning wish things would settle down. However, peasants who must actually feed and shelter guerrillas appear be on side of MB as much as ever. This true despite fact that there are now more guerrillas than in July, placing correspondingly heavier burden on rural people. Army's reprisals against villagers for MB actions appear counterproductive in sense of increasing their hatred of the army and support of MB. In sum, MB's popular support appears to be holding up. (B) Question of organization somewhat more obscure. As reported in Dacca 4066, MB in Gopalganj claims existence permanent chain of command from Colonel Usmani down to Thana-level guerrillas. MB sources informed Australian Deputy High Commissioner (protect) that MB has about 28,000 EBRs, EPRS, police, locally-recruited militia (Ansars) and veterans; 40,000 men in camps being trained for conventional war; and 35,000 men who have completed guerrilla training and are already active; latter reportedly supposedly scattered among 69 base camps and 100 sub-bases throughout province. According this source, MB intends establish 90 base camps eventually. Best judgment we can make at this point is that while MB has not yet developed its organization to degree necessary to overcome Pak Army, it has made considerable progress. First evidence of parallel BD shadow government appeared during month: as reported Dacca 4066, Time Correspondent Dan Coggin met individuals in Gopalganj Subdivision claiming to be governing area in name Bangla Desh Government. Pakistan Internal Situation, Oct. 9, 1971.

Former East Pakistan Governor Abdul Monem Khan shot to death night October 13 at his home in Dacca. As Monem Khan had been conferring with conservative politicians for past several months with view toward ending his retirement, strong likelihood is that assassination carried out by Mukti Bahini. Assassination of Monem Khan, Oct. 14, 1971

The Pakistan Army in East Pakistan has achieved nearly autonomous control of the province, in many respects independent of the policies and direction of President Yahya Khan in Islamabad. Only foreign affairs affecting East Pakistan is firmly in the hands of Islamabad. The relative isolation of President Yahya Khan is probably the result of many factors. Indications of this isolation are that Army commanders in the East pursue independent military operations, the Army governs the province behind the facade of the puppet civilian Governor Malik and his cabinet — who are completely dependent on the Army for their personal security — with limited reference to Islamabad, little but Pakistani successes and India's perfidy is reported from Dacca to Islamabad, and President Yahya Khan lacks independent means of observation, reporting and verification of events in the East. ... The myth of growing political stability in East Pakistan is almost certainly fed to Yahya Khan by reports from his civilian Governor and his Army commanders. The reality is that Army policies and operations — behind the facade of a civilian government — are progressively and seriously alienating the Bengali population in East Pakistan, and that the seeds of rebellion are not only those sown by India. President Yahya Khan's Control in East Pakistan is Increasingly Limited, Nov. 5, 1971

General Farman Ali Khan described the level of Mukti guerrilla insurgency as somewhat intensified but manageable because the newly trained Bengali guerrillas entering from India feared to take action. Over 1,400 guerrillas had entered Dacca district in the last 30 days but only a few had chosen to fight. He acknowledged, off-the-record, that this was due to the terroristic reprisal policy. He also acknowledged that terror and reprisal had an "unfortunate effect on Bengali attitudes." But he said, "all Army commanders had concluded that insurgency was more of a problem in areas where the Army had been too lenient and had not demonstrated clean-up operations." ... General Farman Ali Khan said the Army sought to leave the fighting of the Mukti guerrillas to the newly armed Bengali "Rasikars," who now numbered 60,000. He acknowledged that "Rasikars" — raised as village levies for guard duty with only ten days training, and without NCOs or officers — did not constitute a disciplined force. However, the "Rasikars" are a destabilizing element — living off the land, able to make life and death decisions by denouncing collaborators and openly

pillaging and terrorizing villages without apparent restraint from the Army. With villagers caught between the Rasikars and Mukti guerrillas, law and order is breaking down rapidly in rural East Pakistan. Hence, the rural population is moving either to the cities which are now overpopulated or going to India. ... General Farman Ali Khan accepted the estimate that at least 80 percent of the Hindus had left East Pakistan. He, off-the-record, spoke of about six million refugees who had gone to India and he anticipated that a further 1,500,000 refugees would probably go to India "before the situation settles down." President Yahya Khan's Control in East Pakistan is Increasingly Limited, Nov. 5, 1971

Initially, insurgency was weak. Indians needed several months to train Mukhti Bahini. Mukhti Bahini have conducted border crossings, and we are satisfied there is active Indian involvement in Pakistan fighting. This is mixed operations, with about four times more Indians than Mukhti Bahini. Indians have publicly acknowledged their direct involvement during last 48 hours. Minister of Defense has said Indian troops are permitted to cross border and go far enough into East Pakistan to quell artillery. India-Pakistan Briefing for Yugoslav, Nov. 30, 1971

Primin Indira Gandhi announced to packed Lok Sabha ... that one hour earlier General Niazi, Pak commander in East Bengal, had surrendered unconditionally in Dacca to General Arora, Indian General commanding joint Indian Army / Mukti Bahini operations. Telegram from New Delhi Embassy to Secretary of State, Dec. 16, 1971

Reports continue to pour in of wanton killings of civilians by Indian armed forces personnel and Mukti Bahini in East Pakistan. In fact, American TV networks have shown pictures of huge crowds of people witnessing the torture and execution of people without any trial. ... The Government of Pakistan would be grateful if the Government of the United States would impress upon the Government of India that the Indian occupation forces would be held responsible for the arson, loot, murder and rape by Mukti Bahini and other elements in East Pakistan. Aide Memoire, Dec. 20, 1971

Citizens of largely Bihari areas of Mohammedpur and Mirpur, on the outskirts of Dacca, are living in state of terror. Areas are cut off from communications and food. Lawlessness reigns. The Bihari Question, Dec. 23, 1971.

5

Military Plans of the Bangladesh Liberation War

Prior to Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, India had no plans for large scale military action in East Pakistan. Since the Sino-Indian War of 1962, the primary objective of the Indian Army Eastern Command was the defense of the Indian northern and eastern borders, defending the "Shiliguri Corridor", and on combating insurgencies raging in Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and the Naxalites in West Bengal.

Since 1948 bulk of the Pakistani armed forces were stationed in West Pakistan and the strategic role of the forces in East Pakistan was to hold out until Pakistan defeated India in the west. The Pakistan Army Eastern Command had planned to defend Dhaka until the last by ultimately concentrating their forces along the "Dhaka Bowl", the area surrounded by the rivers Jamuna, Padma and Meghna.

INDIAN EASTERN COMMAND DEPLOYMENTS 1971

The Indian army kept parity with Pakistani forces stationed in East Pakistan since 1965, and in 1971 one armored brigade and one infantry division was deployed in West Bengal. Other Eastern Command units were deployed in Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland. Eastern command had 4 administrative units: the Bengal Area corps (the 9th division and other units), the 23 corps (3rd armored brigade, 17th, 27th, 6th and 20th Mountain divisions) guarding the Shiliguri corridor, as well as ensuring security of Sikkim and Bhutan if needed, the 101st Communication Zone (no combat units, an administrative unit which

operated in the area between the 23 and IV corps), while the IV corps (2nd, 5th, 23rd, 57th and 8th Mountain divisions) ensured the security of Assam, Arunachal, Monipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Nagaland.

April 1971: Indian Intervention in Bangladesh?

The main reason Maj. Gen. Rao Farman Ali and Lt. Gen. Shahabzada Yakub Khan (GOC East Pakistan) had opposed military action against Bengali civilians was the fear of an Indian attack, which the Pakistan army was woefully unprepared to meet in March 1971. The 14th infantry division with its brigades posted at Comilla (53rd), Dhaka (57th), Rangpur (23rd) and Jessore (107th) was the only Pakistani unit in East Pakistan prior to March 1971. The issue of direct military intervention was discussed between the Indian military and political leadership in April 1971. Although some Indian officers expected early intervention, Indian army command decided against immediate intervention, and concluded that a full attack could only take place after November 15 at the earliest, and only after deliberate and extensive preparations. Indian Army Eastern Command took over responsibility for East Pakistan operations on April 29, and on May 15 launched Operation Jackpot, a full fledged operation to arm, train, equip, supply and advise the Mukti Bahini fighters engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Pakistan armed forces.

Indian Army Eastern Command draft plan: May 1971

Indian Eastern Command began drafting an operational plan for military action in Bangladesh from May 1971. Indian planners assumed that Pakistani army would try to defend the whole of the province in order to prevent Mukti Bahini from establishing the government inside Bangladesh. The main objectives of the May draft plan were:

- The capture of Dhaka was the final goal.
- A winter campaign would reduce the chance of Chinese intervention as passes over the Himalayas would be snowed shut and the ground in Bangladesh would be firm and most favorable for armor and mechanized movements. Some troops deployed on the Chinese border can be used in Bangladesh.
- October – April period was the best time to launch an offensive, while the Monsoon rains (May – September) turned the country into a morass.

- Axis of advance should aim to isolate and bypass Pakistani forces – which meant a minimum superiority in numbers was needed. Fortified positions should be bypassed.
- Subsidiary objectives should be picked to occupy communication centers and destroy Pakistani command and control ability.
- Preliminary operations (by Mukti Bahini and then Indian forces) should aim to draw the Pakistani forces near the border, so key areas in the interior are left undefended.

Proposed axis of advance

Eastern Command had concluded that The major rivers divided Bangladesh into 4 sectors:

North – Western Sector (Pakistani designation Northern Sector): The area north of the Padma and west of the Jamuna river. Bogra was the main communication hub and the sector is connected to the western sector through the Hardinge Bridge. The Shiliguri corridor, which is vital for road and rail communication with Eastern India, borders the northern tip of this sector.

A division size attack along the Hili – Gaibandha axis, expected to be heavily defended, aimed to capture Bogra. Later an alternative road was identified, and it was decided to launch a secondary attack on Hili while the main attack bypassed Hili, along the Parvatipur – Phulbari – Pirganj – Palashbari – Bogra axis. Two brigade groups were to operate from Shiliguri area and from Cooch Bihar as needed.

Western Sector (Pakistani designation Western Sector): This area lies south of the Padma and west of the Meghna. The main communication hub is Jessore, along with Jhenaidah and Magura, and Khulna is a vital sea port. From Jessore a road runs east to Faridpur, and via ferry it is possible to approach Dhaka.

Two divisions were to attack along the Boyra – Garibpur – Jessore and Darshana – Kotchadpur – Jhenaidah axis. The natural thrust lines along the Benapol – Jessore and Meherpur – Chuadanga – Jhenaidah, were expected to be heavily defended and was not considered. An infantry brigade was to move along Murshidabad – Kushtia line, capture the Hardinge bridge, then move south to Jhenaidah. Then the whole force would move towards Magura, cross the Madhumati and capture

Faridpur. With the help of the Inland Waterways Flotilla, an assault towards Dhaka across the Padma would be launched.

North Eastern Sector (Pakistani designation Dhaka Bowl): This area sits to the east of river Jamuna, north of Padma and west of the Meghna and contains the city of Dhaka. A branch of the Jamuna flows to the north of Dhaka between the Jamuna to the Meghna rivers, while a rail bridge at Bhairab connects this area with the south eastern sector.

A division would advance along the Kamalpur – Jamalpur – Tangail – Dhaka axis. An additional brigade would support the advance while a Para battalion could be airdropped to Tangail to cut off Pakistani forces.

South Eastern Sector (Pakistani designation Eastern Sector): This lies to the east of Meghna, contains Sylhet, Comilla and the main seaport Chittagong. Control over Ashuganj, Chandpur and Daudkandi was vital to approach Dhaka.

3 divisions were to secure the area between Ashuganj and Chandpur, then if possible approach Dhaka by crossing the Meghna using helicopters or ferry – whichever was available. Indian Navy would blockade Chittagong.

Mukti Bahini support was expected in all phases of the operation.

Proposed Force allotment

Indian Army HQ initially allocated the 9th infantry division, 4th Mountain division, the 50th Para Brigade (army HQ reserve), and the 340th brigade group for operations in the east alongside whatever forces Indian Eastern Command could assemble. Eastern command proposed the following allocation of forces:

1. The XXXIII corps would guard the Shiliguri corridor with the 71 Mountain brigade, which could also move against the North Western Sector, while the 20th Mountain division and the 340th brigade would bear the burnt of the fighting. The 3rd armored brigade can also be employed as needed.
2. The IV corps (8th, 57th and 23rd mountain divisions) would be responsible for the South Eastern Sector, while a rear HQ looked after Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland and the Chinese border.

3. A new corps (4th Mountain and 9th divisions) was slated for the Western Sector operations.
4. The 6th Mountain (part of Army HQ reserve designated for operations in Bhutan against Chinese moves) and the 9th Mountain brigade would be used in the North Eastern Sector.

Seven divisions, 3 independent brigade groups, one armored brigade and the Mukti Bahini was earmarked for the draft plan, which was shared with the DMO, Lt. Gen. K.K. Singh. During May – November, while Mukti Bahini engaged Pakistani forces, Eastern Command, having never contemplated or anticipated large scale military action against East Pakistan began building up logistical infrastructure while army support services (Engineer, Ordnance and Medical) began to build up capacity to sustain an 4 week long campaign.

Mukti Bahini plan: July 1971

General M.A.G Osmani (Commander in Chief Bangladesh Forces) had differences of opinion with the Indian leadership regarding the role of the Mukti Bahini in the conflict. Indian leadership initially envisioned Bengali forces to be trained into a small elite guerrilla force of 8,000 members led by the surviving East Bengal Regiment soldiers operating in small cells around Bangladesh to facilitate the eventual Indian intervention, but the Bangladesh Government in exile and General Osmani favored the following strategy:

1. Bengali conventional force would occupy lodgment areas inside Bangladesh and then Bangladesh government would request international diplomatic recognition and intervention. Initially Mymensingh was picked for this operation, but Gen. Osmani later settled on Sylhet.
- 2.. Sending the maximum number to guerrillas inside Bangladesh as soon as possible with the following objectives:
 - Increasing Pakistani casualties through raids and ambush
 - Cripple economic activity by hitting power stations, railway lines, storage depots and communication networks.
 - Destroy Pakistan army mobility by blowing up bridges/culverts, fuel depots, trains and river crafts.
 - The strategic objective is to make the Pakistanis to spread their forces inside the province, so attacks can be made on isolated Pakistani detachments.

Bangladesh was divided into Eleven sectors in July while 3 brigades (8 infantry battalions and 3 artillery batteries) were put into action between July - September. During June -July, Mukti Bahini had regrouped across the border with Indian aid through Operation Jackpot and began sending 2000 - 5000 guerrillas across the border, the so-called Moonsoon Offensive, which for various reasons (lack of proper training, supply shortage, lack of a proper support network inside Bangladesh etc.) failed to achieve its objectives. Bengali regular forces also attacked BOPs in Mymensingh, Comilla and Sylhet, but the results were mixed. Pakistani authorities concluded that they had successfully contained the Monsoon Offensive, and they were not far from the truth.

Pakistani defense plan: June 1971

Pakistan Army Eastern Command, after being reinforced by the 9th and 16th divisions in April 1971, moved the 9th division HQ (CO Maj. Gen. Shawkat Riza) to Jessore, putting the 107th (CO Brig. Makhdum Hayat, HQ Jessore) and the 57th (CO Brig. Jahanzab Arbab, HQ Jhenida) under this division. The 16th Division (CO Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah) HQ moved to Bogra, the 23rd (CO Brig. Abdullah Malik, HQ Rangpur), the 205th (HQ Bogra) and the 34th (HQ Nator) brigades were attached to it. The 14th division (CO Maj. Gen. Rahim) HQ stayed at Dhaka, its brigades were at Mymensingh (27th), Sylhet (313th) and Comilla (117th). The 97th independent brigade was formed in Chittagong while the 53rd brigade was moved to Dhaka as command reserve. By mid June Pakistan army had occupied all the towns and fortified 90 of the 370 BoPs (half of the BoPs were destroyed by Indian shellfire by July 1971 to facilitate Mukti Bahini infiltration) and deployed in all the sensitive towns, while the other Para military units were deployed around the country to maintain internal security. From their bases the army conducted sweep and clearing operations in the neighboring areas to wipe out insurgents and their supporters. Pakistani forces relied on sudden barrages at selected areas to interdict Mukti Bahini infiltration. Pakistanis also build up an intelligence network to collect information on Mukti Bahini activity and sent informers across the border to give early warning of Mukti Bahini activity.

Review of June 1971

Pakistan Eastern Command had run Operation X-Sunderbans in 1967 and Operation Titumir in 1970 to formulate the defense plan for East Pakistan, which basically was:

- According to the Pakistani war doctrine, the defense of the east lies in the west, the primary objective of Pakistani forces was to hold out until Pakistan had defeated India in the west. Against a conventional Indian attack with 3:1 superiority in numbers and enemy dominance of the air and sea, Pakistani forces in Bangladesh would probably be able to last for a maximum of 3 weeks.
- The whole province should not be defended, troops should not be deployed along the border or along the "Forward line (running north from Khulna-Jessore-Jhenida-Rajshahi-Hili-Rangpur, then east to Jamalpur-Mymensingh-Bhairab-Sylhet, then south to Comilla-Chittahong.
- Priority should be given to defend the "Dhaka Bowl" (North – Eastern Sector to the Indians) in general and the city of Dhaka should be held at all costs.

Brig. Gulam Jilani (later DG ISI), COS to Gen. Niazi, reviewed the existing East Pakistan defence plan in June 1971 in light of the prevailing circumstances and left the plan basically unchanged. The following assumptions were made while reevaluating the plan:

- The main Indian thrust would come from the east, not the west as assumed in the earlier plan. Indian army would attack to take control over the area between Sylhet – Chandpur, while a secondary attack would be aimed at Rangpur – Bogra and at Mymensingh. At least 5 Indian infantry divisions, supported by an armored brigade would launch the attack. The main objective of the Indian attack was to occupy as much territory as possible to set up the Bangladesh government in exile inside the province.
- Indians would take the initiative to start the war. By this time, the insurgency situation would have improved and Eastern Command would be ready for both internal and external threats. If not, internal security measures have to be taken to contain the insurgency.
- All communication links would be fully functional and under government control to facilitate the movement of troops according to the plan.

Conceptually the new plan was the same as the old one, Pakistani units were to fight a series of defensive battles in their deployment areas before taking position to defend the Dhaka Bowl, every inch of the province would not be defended. Gen. Niazi added the following to plan:

- Pakistani army to launch attacks towards Tripura, Calcutta or the Shiliguri corridor if needed.
- Take over as much Indian territory if possible when opportunity arises.

No wargames were conducted to factor in the new directives or specific plans were drawn up to attain these objectives. The revised plan was sent to Rawalpindi and approved in August 1971. Pakistan army probably enjoyed their most peaceful period during the occupation of Bangladesh in 1971 between Late May and mid July, when Mukti Bahini was reorganizing and the Indian army was implementing Operation Jackpot in their support.

Indian Army HQ Plan: August 1971

The draft plan of Lt. Gen K.K Singh, DMO of Indian army was presented to Eastern Command in August of 1971. The strategic assumptions and objectives of this plan were as follows:

- India can only assemble the 7/8 divisions needed for a successful operation in Bangladesh during winter, when the Chinese army would be immobilized. The expected Chinese response would probably occur in the Chumbi valley in Sikkim north of the Shiliguri corridor – which would pin down Indian forces away from Bangladesh.
- Priority should be given to strike/occupy airports, port, ferries, and bridges to isolate Pakistani units from one another, then occupy communication hubs to neutralize the mobility of Pakistani units.
- Maximum destruction of Pakistani forces and occupation of territory was the primary objectives.
- As soon as feasible – move to quickly occupy Dhaka.

However, Gen. K.K. Singh did not think it was feasible to occupy Dhaka with the forces available or within 21 days, the time span envisioned to complete all operations in Bangladesh. The gist of the DMO Plan, presented to Eastern Command in August 1971, was:

North – Western Sector: The XXXIII corps (OC Lt. Gen. Thapan) would launch the 20th division attack along the Hili – Ghoraghat – Gaibandha axis to cut the area in two. The 71st brigade group would launch an attack along the Thakurgaon – Dinajpur axis along both banks of the Atrai river, while another brigade attacked along the Lalmunirhut – Rangpur axis. After reaching Gaibandha, a group from the 20th division would move south towards Bogra, while the 71st and 20th occupied Dinajpur, Saidpur and Rangpur.

Western Sector: The newly created II corps (OC Lt. Gen. Tappy Raina) would launch the 4th Mountain and the 9th infantry divisions along the Darshana – Jibannagar – Jhenaidah and the Benapol – Jessore axis against Pakistani 9th division. A group from the 4th mountain would move along Meherpur – Kushtia axis to occupy Hardinge bridge, then move to Jhenaidah. From Jhenaidah the 4th Mountain would move east to Magura, while the 9th moved south to occupy Khulna.

North Eastern Sector: The 101st Communication zone would move a division along the Kamalpur – Jamalpur – Tangail – Dhaka axis and take control of the area north of the Brahmaputra river. No troops were allocated for operations against Dhaka.

South Eastern Sector: The IV corps (OC Lt. Gen. Sagat Singh) would attack with 3 divisions. The 8th Mountain would move along the Shamshearnagar – Maulavi Bazaar axis, and contain Sylhet. The 57th Mountain would capture Comilla and then occupy the area between Chandpur and Daudkandi. The 23rd would occupy the Feni – Laksham area then moves south to capture Chittagong.

Gen. Sam Manekshaw, Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (OC eastern Command) and Lt. Gen. K.K. Singh all held the opinion that with the fall of Khulna and Chittagong, the primary seaports, Pakistani forces isolated inside the Dhaka bowl would capitulate. Lt. Gen. Jacob, COS Eastern Command disagreed and insisted that forces for the capture of Dhaka should be allocated while the Indian Eastern Fleet, vastly superior in numbers, could easily blockade the ports. Gen. Jacob was overruled. The DMO had assumed that India did not have adequate forces to liberate Dhaka within the allotted time span, so the objective was to liberate the maximum amount of territory. Since this plan did not assume India attacking with a 3:1 advantage in numbers against the assumed 4 Pakistani infantry divisions in Bangladesh, Gen. K.K.

Singh envisioned the Mukti Bahini helping to fill the gap in strength as follows:

- Decrease the combat capability of the Pakistani army in Bangladesh, by inflicting casualties, sabotaging installations, disrupting logistics, and decreasing morale and increasing combat fatigue by increasing Mukti Bahini activity along the Indian border and inside the country.
- *Take up the responsibility to operate inside the "Dhaka Bowl" after Indian army had isolated the Pakistani army

Indian army had no authority over Mukti Bahini and could only make suggestions to General Osmani. However, Gen Osmani conducted a review of Mukti Bahini activity in September 1971 and put a new plan in place.

Mukti Bahini Strategy: September reevaluation

The failure of the so-called Monsoon Offensive brought these facts to light:

- Small number of hastily trained guerrillas inside Bangladesh would require time before becoming an effective force.
- Bangladesh conventional forces had not acquired the needed manpower and training level to create lodgment areas and without Indian intervention would not have the required air and artillery support to hold onto the liberated areas on their own.

General Osmani thought about dismantling the regular battalions operating under Z, K and S forces and sending platoons from these forces to aid the guerrillas in September, but ultimately did not. Bangladesh government in exile decided to send 20,000 trained guerrillas into Bangladesh from September onwards, on the assumption that even if 1/3 of the force succeeded in it' objective, the effect on the Pakistani forces would be devastating.

Indian High Command also stepped up their efforts, beginning from increasing the volume of supplies (arms/ammunition/medicine) in September to having Gen. B.N. Sarkar, DMO Eastern Command and OC Operation Jackpot coordinating operations with Bangladesh Forces HQ. Gen Sarkar would draw up monthly objectives for Mukti Bahini after consulting with Bangladesh H, then would send a copy of objectives to Mukti Bahini sector commanders and another to adjacent

Indian units, thus eliminating the scope of misunderstanding and increasing the cooperation and coordination between the forces and ensuring common objectives were targeted.

Final Pakistani Plan: September – October 1971

General Niazi, along with General Jamshed (GOC EPCAF), General Rahim (2IC Eastern Command), Brig. Bakir (COS Eastern Command), Rear Admiral Sharif and Air Commodore Enam reviewed the existing plan and updated it to factor in the manpower shortage, logistical difficulties, and the directive of the GHQ to defend every inch of East Pakistan. The initial assumptions were:

- Indian army Eastern Command would use 12 infantry/mountain divisions and an armored brigade for the invasion under 3 corps commands, supported by Mukti Bahini and BSF units.
- Mukti Bahini will step up its activities and try to occupy border areas and if possible occupy a large area of the province adjacent to the border prior to the Indian assault.
- The PAF in East Pakistan would last only 24 hours against the IAF eastern contingent
- The main Indian assault would come from the west (opposite Jessore sector) with a subsidiary attack from the east (opposite Comilla sector).
- The naval detachment would move into the harbors once hostilities commenced.
- Indian strategic objective is to occupy as much of the province as quickly as possible to set up the Bangladesh government and the Mukti Bahini in the liberated area. Full occupation of the province is not the Indian goal.

Gen. Niazi chose the Fortresses concept of defence and the planners decided on a single defensive deployment of troops on the border, which went against the troop deployments advocated by the earlier plans. This was done to stick to the GHQ order of not surrendering any territory to the Mukti Bahini.

Defensive lines

Once the fortress defense was chosen, General Niazi and his staff designated the following cities as fortresses: Jessore, Jhenida,

Bogra, Rangpur, Comilla and Bhairab Bazar (these were located on communication hubs), Jamalpur and Mymensingh (defending the northern perimeter of the Dhaka bowl), and Sylhet and Chittagong (independent defense areas). There were 4 lines of defense:

1. The troops deployed on the border was the forward line – this was way in front of the forward line envisioned in the X- Subnderban exercise of 1967 – which had deemed the whole border impossible to defend against a conventional attack. The BoPs were all located on this line. 2. The Fortresses: All the fortresses were located on this line except Chittagong and Sylhet – which were to be independent defensive areas. This was the forward line of the 1967 X-Sunderbans plan and it was also deemed indefensible in its entirety in that exercise. 3. Dhaka Outer Defense Line: Troops from the fortresses were to retreat to this line. The line ran from Pabna in the west to Bera then Sirajganj to the north, then to Mymensing. From Mymensingh the line went south to Bhairab Bazar, from Bhairab it ran southwest along the Meghna to Daudkandi and Chandpur, then ran northwest along Padma then to the Madhumati, along the Madhumati back to Pabna. The fortresses of Bhairab and Mymensingh was part of this line. Pabna, Bera, Chandpur, Daudkandi and Faridpur was to be turned into fortresses, while Kamarkhali, Goalanda, Nagarbari and Narshindi was to be strong points. Faridpur and Narshindi was turned into strong points when was begun in December, the rest of the sites were not built up. 4. Dhaka Inner Defense Line: This ran from Manikganj in the west to Kaliakair, on to Tongi, then to Naryanganj and from Naryanganj back to Manikganj. This area was to have a fortress – Naryanganj and strong points at Kalaikair and Tongi. None were developed by December 1971.

Having chosen the defensive concept and defensive lines, Pakistan Eastern Command outlined the course of action as follows:

- Troops deployed on the border would hold on till ordered to retreat by the GOC
- Troops would 'Trade space for time' and fight a delaying action while falling back to the nearest fortress
- The fortress would be defended to the last – which was understood until a certain amount of time needed for Pakistan to deliver the knockout blow in the west.

- The troops formations would fall back to the Dhaka outer line to defend Dhaka as needed.

The divisional commanders were authorised to make plans for limited counterattacks in Indian territory to aid in their defensive objectives, which was to maintain control of the main pathways leading into the province.

ASSUMED ENEMY AXIS OF ATTACK AND PAKISTANI DEPLOYMENTS

Pakistani planners assumed, based on intelligence estimates, that an Indian force of 8 to 12 infantry divisions and an armored brigade, along with the Mukti Bahini would launch the invasion of East Pakistan in winter. Pakistan army had broadly divided the country into 4 sectors, and the Pakistani deployments were:

Northern Sector (Indian designation: North Western Sector): This area is to the north of Padma and West of Jamuna rivers, encompassing the Rajshahi, Pabna, Bogra, Rangpur and Dinajpur districts. Pakistani planners were undecided on whether the Indian attack would come from the Siliguri Corridor south towards Bogura or on the Hili – Chilmari axis from southwest to northeast to cut the area in two. The 16th Infantry division (CO Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, HQ Bogra then Nator) was deployed to counter both possibilities.

The 23rd Brigade (CO brig. S.A Ansari) was to defend the area north of Hili – Chilmari axis. The troops were to retreat to Dinajpur, Saidpur and Rangpur from the border areas, while Dinajpur, Saidpur, T-Junction and Thakurgaon were turned into strongpoints. The area north of the Tista River was a separate defense area, where the 25th Punjab, 86th Mujahid, 1 wing EPCAF and the independent heavy mortar battery was located.

The 205th Brigade (CO Brig. Tajammul Hossain Malik) would defend the area between Hili (a strongpoint) and Naogaon then fall back to Bogra (fortress) and hold out. Palashbari, Phulchari and Joyporhut were turned into strongpoints. The 34th Brigade (CO Brig. M.A. Nayeem) would look after the area between Rajshahi and Naogaon, and if need would fall back to the Outer Dhaka defense line and defend from Pabna and Bera, both proposed fortresses. In

September, an ad hoc brigade was formed in Rajshahi to block the Padma from any enemy riverine operations.

Western Sector (Indian designation: Western Sector): The area south of the Padma and east of the Meghna contained the Khulna, Jessore, Kushtia, Faridpur, Barisal and Patuakhali districts and was defended by the 9th Division (CO Maj. Gen. Ansari) made up of 2 infantry brigades: the 107th (CO Brig. Makhdum Hayat, HQ Jessore), covering the border from Jibannagar to the Sunderbans to the south, and the 57th (CO Brig. Manzoor Ahmed, HQ Jhenida), which covered the border from Jibannagar to the Padma in the north. Pakistani planners assumed three likely axis of advance from the Indian army:

- The main attack would come in the Calcutta – Banapol – Jessore axis. The 107th Brigade was tasked with guarding the Benapol axis.
- Another thrust would be made either using the Krishnanagar – Darshana – Chuadanga axis, or the Murshidabad – Rajapur – Kushtia axis. The 57th Brigade (18th Punjab and 29th Baloch) was deployed to cover the Darshana and Meherpur area. To defend the Hardinge Bridge, a tank squadron was placed under Eastern Command control near Kushtia.

In September, an ad hoc brigade, the 314th, (CO Col. Fazle Hamid, one Mujahib battalion, and 5 companies each from EPCAF and Razakars) was created to defend the city of Khulna.

The 57th and 107th brigades were to defend the border then fall back to Jhenida and Jessore, and prevent the enemy from crossing the Jessore – Jhenida road, which runs almost parallel to the border. The brigades also had the option to fall back across the Madhumati river, which formed part of the Dhaka outer defense line, and defend the area between Faridpur, Kamarkhali and Goalanda.

The 14th Division initially had 4 brigades: the 27th (CO Brig. Saadullah Khan, HQ Mymensingh), 313th (Brig Iftikar Rana, HQ Sylhet), the 117th (Brig. Mansoor H. Atif, HQ Comilla) and the 53rd (Brig. Aslam Niazi, HQ Dhaka) and looked after the rest of the province. It was decided in September to make the 14th responsible for the eastern sector encompassing Sylhet, Comilla and Noakhali districts only, while the 36th ad hoc division was remade responsible for the Dhaka Bowl.

Dhaka Bowl (Indian designation: North Eastern Sector): Pakistani planners anticipated a brigade size attack on the Kamalpur – Sherpur – Jamalpur axis and another along the Haluaghat – Mymensingh axis. They deemed this area was impassable because of the hilly terrain on the Indian side and the Modhupur Jungle and the Brahmaputra river to the north of Dhaka. Pakistani deployment in this sector was: 93rd brigade was responsible for the border area between the Jamuna river and Sunamganj. It developed strong points at Kamalpur, Haluaghat and Durgapur, while Jamalpur and Mymensingh were turned into fortresses. The course of the Brahmaputra river was designated as the “line of no penetration”.

53rd brigade was posted in Dhaka as command reserve and was responsible for the Dhaka inner defense line until it was moved to Feni. Dhaka city also had Razakar, EPCAF and other units that could be deployed for defense of the city.

Eastern Sector (Indian designation: South Eastern Sector): This sector included the Chittagong, Noakhali, Comilla and Sylhet districts. The anticipated lines of advance were:

- Agartala - Akhaura – Bhairab Bazar axis would be the main thrust, with another attack coming towards Maulavi Bazar – Shamshearnagar and third near Comilla.

The 14th Division (CO: Maj. Gen. Rahim Khan, then Maj. Gen. Abdul Majid Kazi) was initially HQed at Dhaka until the creation of the 36th ad hoc division to cover the Dhaka Bowl, when its HQ moved to Brahmanbaria. Chittagong was designated as an independent defense zone under control of the 97th independent brigade. Also, two ad hoc brigades were created, the 202nd and the 93rd out of the units of the 14th division. The division order of battle after September was:

202nd ad hoc brigade (CO Brig. Salimullah, HQ Sylhet) was responsible for the border stretching from Sunamganj to the north west of Sylhet to Lata to the east of that city. Sylhet was designated as a fortress. The 313rd Brigade (CO Brig. Iftikhar Rana), HQed at Maulavi Bazar, which was developed as a strong point and the unit was responsible for the border between Lata and Kamalganj. After resisting the expected enemy thrust along the Maulavi Bazar – Shamshearnagar front, the brigade was to move south and link up with the 27th Brigade near Brahmanbaria. Gen Niazi also envisioned this brigade launching an assault inside Tripura if possible.

The 27th Brigade (CO Brig. M. Saadullah) was responsible for covering the border between Kamalganj and Kasba, just north of Comilla, and would block the expected main enemy axis of advance, with strong points at Akhaura and Brahmanbaria. Brig. Saadullah anticipated a 3 pronged assault on his area around Akhaura and planned to ultimately fall back to Bhairab, which was the nearest fortress and part of the Dhaka outer defense line.

The 117th Brigade (CO Brig. S.M. Attif, Hqcd at Mainamati) was responsible for the border between Kasba to the north of Comilla (a fortress) to Belonia in Noakhali. It was to concentrate near Comilla in the event of an Indian advance, then fall back to Daudkandi and Chhandpur, which were part of the Dhaka outer defense line and designated "Fortresses". The 97th independent Infantry Brigade (CO Brig. Ata Md. Khan Malik, HQ Chittagong) was to cover the Chittagong fortress and Chittagong hill tracks.

Last Minute Changes: November 1971

GHQ Rawalpindi approved in October 1971 and also gave permission to conduct offensive operations against English Bazar or Balurghat in West Bengal and sending SSG commandos to destroy the Farrakka barrage

39th Ad hoc division

In November Gen. Niazi split the 14th division, keeping the 202nd, 27th and the 313rd brigades under it. The 117th, 53rd and the 91st brigades were placed under the newly created 39th ad hoc division (CO Maj. Gen. Rahim, Hq Chandpur with the following responsibilities:

117th Brigade was to cover the area from Kasba to the north of Comilla to Chaudagram to the south. After fighting at the border the force was to redeploy around the Mainamati fortress and then fall back to defend Daudkandi, which was on the Dhaka Outer defense line. The 53rd brigade was transferred from Dhaka to guard the border from Chaddagram to Belonia. This brigade was to fall back to Chandpur, a fortress located on the Dhaka outer defense line after its initial defense of Feni and Laksham.

91st ad hoc brigade (CO Mian Taskinuddin, HQ Chittagong) was to guard the Belonia – Ramgarh area. It was to fall back to Chittagong after defending the area.

Air aspect of the *Liberation War* 1971

Air power played a pivotal role in the final phase of the Bangladesh Liberation War. For the first time the people of Bangladesh came face to face with the awesome power of the air force and the way it could shape the destiny of a nation. For most people in Bangladesh, war in the air was a unique experience. There are important lessons to be learnt from these air operations that are relevant for our future military planning. Although by September 71, the nucleus of the Bangladesh Air Force was raised in Dimapore, Assam with a number of small transport aircraft and helicopters; it could not have significantly influenced the outcome of war. This article will, therefore, be limited to the air operations of the Indian and Pakistani air forces in the East.

THE OPPOSING FORCES

In March 1971, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in the East consisted of a squadron of F-86E (No.14 Squadron) fighters operating from Tejgaon. The airfield complex was defended by light anti-aircraft guns; there were no surface to air missiles. The plans to make Kurmitola airfield operational and raise another squadron with the Chinese F-6 fighters remained unimplemented. Since 26 March 1971, the PAF fighters had been attacking suspected Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) strongholds, causing large-scale civilian casualties. During this period, the No.14 Squadron flew between 100 and 170 combat sorties a month. However, while the Army's strength was bolstered four times by December 71, the air force strength reduced. The second fighter squadron never arrived; by October 71, the only available long range radar was removed from Kurmitola to Pakistan; and by the end of November, the only C-130 transport plane was also withdrawn. It appeared that the Pak air force and army high commands were at cross-purpose.

Facing the PAF in the East was the Eastern Air Command (EAC) of the Indian Air Force (IAF). The Headquarters of the EAC was located in Shillong, Meghalaya. The squadron deployment is shown Table-1.

The PAF was not only facing a force 12 times larger, the entire population of Bangladesh had turned hostile towards them. This acted as a tremendous psychological pressure. As the summer rain ceased

and winter set in, the prospect of an all out war between India and Pakistan became real.

The First Blood

The first air combat in the East took place on 22 November '71. The PAF had flown a number of missions on that morning in support of the army who were engaged in fierce clashes with the joint India-Mukti Bahini forces along the Jessore border. The morning missions went ahead unopposed. Then at about 3-00 PM when three PAF F-86s were attacking the ground forces, they were pounced by four Gnats (No.22 Sqn) scrambled from Dumdum. Two of the F-86s were shot down within minutes; both the pilots ejected and were taken prisoner in India. It was apparent that without radar cover the F-86s were easy prey to the attacking Gnats who were directed by IAF radars at Barrackpore. Since that day till the end of the war, the PAF did not venture beyond 50 nm of Dhaka.

IAF Counter air Operations

There was no air action till mid-night of 3-4 December when the IAF launched counter attack in retaliation to the PAF preemptive against their airfields in the Western sector. Canberra bombers kept attacking Tejgaon in waves till morning when the fighters the Hunters, Su-7 and MiG-21s, took over. The F-86, being a day fighter, could not operate at night. However, as the day broke, they went up repeatedly to challenge the IAF fighters. People of Dhaka witnessed thrilling low-level dogfight throughout 4 and 5 December. The IAF concentrated in attacking the aircraft on the ground, but failed to cause significant damage to the PAF assets in well-dispersed and camouflaged locations. During these two days of air combat, three PAF fighters were shot down; all three pilots ejected two over Ghazipur and the third over Zinjira. While the Zinjira pilot could be rescued, the other two were listed as 'missing'. After the war, it was revealed that they were killed by hostile villagers. It was a testimony to the anger the Pak forces had generated among otherwise placid villagers.

The IAF too suffered significant loss on the Day-, they lost one Su-7 and six Hunters. While three fighters were shot down in air combat, the others were destroyed by anti-aircraft fire. Three IAF pilots were killed, two were taken prisoner and two others managed

to reach back to base. By the evening of 5 December, the IAF realised that a change of tactic was necessary. On the morning of 6 December, four MiG-21s (No. 28 Sqn) from Gauhati dive-bombed Tejgaon runway scoring several hits. Since then, waves of MiG-21s and Hunters kept attacking the runway and cratered it so badly that the PAF in the East was effectively grounded. By the next day, Kurmitola airfield was also bombed and made unusable. The IAF thus achieved complete mastery of the air.

Operations in Support of Ground Forces

The IAF could now concentrate in supporting their advancing army. Movements of Pakistani troops during day time came to a virtual halt due to relentless IAF air attack. Ferries across major river crossings were sunk by the IAF thus denying the Pak army its line of retreat to Dhaka. Meanwhile, the IAF fighters kept on visiting Dhaka during the day to ensure that the damaged runway at Tejgaon and Kurmitola remained inoperative. The IAF also bombed other airfields, including the abandoned WWII airfields such as in Comilla, Lalmonirhat and Shamsher Nagar to deny their use by any external aerial reinforcement. From 7 December onward, INS Vikrant, Indian Navy's aircraft carrier, joined the war by attacking the coastal targets of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Barisal. Whatever remained of the Pakistan Navy was destroyed or sunk. The airfields in Cox's Bazar, Chiringa and Feni were made inoperative.

Airborne and Heliborne Operations

On 11 December, a Para battalion was dropped in daylight near Tangail. The unit, flown in by waves of IAF transport aircraft, such as An-12, C-119 and DC-3 Dakotas were in full view of those on the ground. Instead of hostile groundfire which usually greets the descending paratroopers, the Indians were virtually mobbed by the populace, wild with jubilation. Next day, further reinforcement and re-supply were flown in. The Paras had cut-off the rear line of Pak Army units in Jamalpur-Mymensingh axis. The Pakistani retreat soon turned into a rout.

Meanwhile, the helicopter fleet of the IAF played key role in two major operations. First, on 7 December a battalion of infantry was helilifted to the outskirts of Sylhet. These forces captured

Sylhet virtually without a fight. The Pakistani forces scattered in disarray. Then on 10 December, while the Pak Army were in their dug-in position around Bhairab-Ashuganj area, elements of the Indian heliborne forces were transported by Mi-4 helicopters across the river Meghna and dropped in Narshingdi-Raipura area cutting the Pak Army's line of retreat. In the next 36 hours, over 110 sorties were flown. The Mi-4, which normally carried fourteen troops, carried as many as twenty-three on board. After securing Narshingdi, Indian forces captured Daudkandi and Baidder Bazar on 14 and 15 December respectively, both with helicopter assault. The skyline of Dhaka was soon visible in the distance.

Air Power in Psychological Warfare

With the PAF effectively grounded in the East, the Canberra bombers and some fighter squadrons were withdrawn to the Western theatre. IAF transport aircraft were pressed to fly over Dhaka at night at high altitude and drop bombs around the cantonment area at irregular intervals. These attacks were putting psychological pressure on the Pakistanis. Because as the lumbering aircraft kept circling overhead, the Pakistani forces were having sleepless nights worrying where the next bomb would land. Although most bombs fell in the cantonment area, on 5 December night, one bomb landed on an orphanage in Tejgaon area killing a large number of children. Other than this incident, civilian population was generally safe from collateral damage, so common in an air war.

This war shows that it is very important NOT to have all your eggs in one basket. If the PAF had more than one airfield with multiple runways, the F-86s would not be grounded so early. Also, if the PAF had a number of radars, especially covering the forward areas, their operations would not be so curtailed. The need for a mixed air defence system composed of fighters, anti-aircraft guns and missiles supported by a robust command and control system was once again emphasised. It was also apparent that assets, if camouflaged and dispersed, could be difficult to destroy as was evident in Tejgaon. The IAF air operations went off like a symphony with the right notes striking at the right time. Compared to more than 1100 missions flown during the 14 day war, the 19 aircraft lost, including 6 due to accident, speaks of a high standard of training.

The war showed the versatility of the helicopter and air transport forces and how, if used intelligently, those assets could change the face of the battle. The need for intelligence and their dissemination to the users, accurately and in time, was also emphasized.

The war revealed the all important need of public support behind military operations. While Pakistani pilots ejecting over Bangladesh were killed by the local people, the Indians were safely transported back to their bases. These must have acted as a great demoralising factor for the Pakistanis. Unlike the Pakistani top brass who were often at cross-purpose, the Indian military leadership was clear in their aim and objective and the means to achieve those. Once the task was assigned and the military was provided with the wherewithal to accomplish the mission, there were little political or bureaucratic interference. In the future military planning for Bangladesh these lessons will always remain relevant.

Final Mitro Bahini Plan: November 1971

The Indian Army HQ plan of August was modified by Eastern Command during October - November and operational instructions were given to various formations. The final plan did not target Dhaka as the main objective, and a contingency scheme to quickly withdraw at least 2 divisions and redeploy against possible Chinese moves was also incorporated. Mukti Bahini conventional forces were attached to various Indian formations while Mukti Bahini guerrillas not yet deployed inside Bangladesh were formed into infantry companies as auxiliary units.

North – Western Sector (Pakistani designation Northern Sector): The XXXIII corps (OC Lt. general Thapan) was given the 20th Mountain division (initially deployed in near Tibet border), the 71st and 471st Engineer brigade group, 340th (redeployed from Rajasthan) and 9th Mountain brigades and the 3rd armored brigade. Pakistani 16th division defended this sector.

Lt. Gen. Aurora preferred a brigade size attack along the Hili – Gaibandha axis, while other brigades would fan out to the north and south to occupy major towns. Gen. Thapan preferred to bypass Hili and move to Gaibandha using an alternate route using two brigades. The final draft plan was:

- The 71st brigade group (redeployed from Nagaland) and Mukti Bahini would advance south from Panchagarh towards Dinajpur along both banks of Atrai river.
- The 340th brigade would operate in the area south of Dinajpur, while occupation of Dinajpur and Rangpur, objectives of the August plan, was dropped.
- The 20th Mountain division (redeployed from Tibet border) would use the 202nd brigade against Pakistani positions at Hili, while the 66th brigade bypassed Hili along the Phulbari – Pirganj – Gobindaganj – Bogra axis, thus splitting apart Pakistani forces in the sector. The 165th brigade was in reserve securing Balurghat and would support either brigade if needed.
- A Mixed brigade of Mukti Bahini (Sector no 7) and BSF would advance along the Malda – Nawbganj – Rajshahi axis.]
- The 9th Mountain brigade and Mukti Bahini (Sector no 6) would occupy the area north of Tista and then move south to Rangpur.

Lt. Gen. Aurora made two changes: He ordered Gen. Thapan to make the Hili –Gaibandha the main thrust line and the capture of Rangpur one of the objectives despite objections of Gen. Thapan and Jakob.

Western Sector (Pakistani designation Western Sector): This sector was defended by Pakistani 9th division. The newly created II Corps (4th Mountain and 9th Infantry divisions) along with Mukti Bahini was deployed against this sector. The plan was:

- Mukti Bahini Sectors 8 and 9 would attack along the Satkhira – Khulna axis, assisted by units of the Bengal Area corps.
- The 9th division initially planned to attack along the Benapol – Jessore axis. At Gen. Jacob's suggestion, the main thrust was set along the Boyra – Garibpur – Jessore axis while a secondary attack would be made along the Benapol – Jessore line.
- The role of the 4th Mountain division was hotly debated by Gen. Jacob and Raina. Gen. Jacob wanted the division to attack along the Shikarpur – Jhenida axis with a secondary attack along the Meherpur – Kushtia axis to capture the Hardinge bridge, an objective selected by the Army HQ. Gen Raina preferred to keep the division close to the 9th and wanted to move along the Darshan –Jibannagar –Kotchandpur axis with a secondary thrust along the Jibannagar

– Chuadanga axis. Gen Riana got his way when Indian army activity alerted Pakistani forces about the possible Indian thrust along the Shikarpur – Jhenida line.

After isolating Jessore and Jhenaidah, the 9th division was to send a brigade to capture Khulna, while a brigade from the 4th Mountain would move north to take Kushtia and Hardinge bridge. The rest of the force was to head east to capture Magura and Faridpur, then cross the Padma and move on Dhaka.

North Eastern Sector (Pakistani designation Dhaka Bowl): Eastern Command was not allocated the 6th Mountain division or the HQ of the 2nd Mountain division for this area, so the 101st Communication zone was picked to head operations in this sector. Pakistani 36th ad hoc division defended this area. Indian plan of attack was:

- The FJ brigade (Mukti Bahini Sector 11 and BSF units) would attack Durgapur and Haluaghat and move towards Mymensingh.
- The 95th brigade group would move along the Kamalpur – Bakshiganj – Jamalpur axis. After crossing the Brahmaputra, Jamalpur would be isolated, then the Indian force, aided by Kaderia Bahini would move to Tangail.
- A Para battalion would be air dropped in Tangail.

After securing Tangail, Mitro Bahini would move towards Dhaka, reinforced by 2/3 brigades not designated in the plan. Mukti Bahini was expected to start an uprising in Dhaka to aid the advancing forces.

South Eastern Sector (Pakistani designation Eastern Sector): Pakistani 14th infantry and 39th ad hoc divisions defended this sector. Mukti Bahini sectors 1 – 5, K and S force brigades and Indian IV corps was selected to operate in this sector. The plan was:

- Echo Force brigade (Mukti Bahini Z force brigade, BSF units, Mukti Bahini Sector #5) would advance on Sylhet from the north from several directions.
- 8th Mountain division (redeployed from Mizoram) would move the 81st mountain brigade along Shamsheernagar – Maulavi Bazaar and the 59th Mountain brigade would advance along the Kulaura – Fenchuganj axis with Mukti Bahini sector no 4. The 81st was to secure the Sherpur and Shadipur ferry and then become the corps reserve while the 59th moved north to Sylhet.

- 57th Mountain division (redeployed from Nagaland) would attack in Akhaura –Brahmanbaria area. The 61st brigade and would secure the area north of Comilla and contain the city. The 311th mountain brigade would attack to the north of Akhaura towards Ashuganj while the 73rd brigade would attack from the south along the Akhaura – Brahmanbaria axis. Mukti Bahini S force brigade would attack towards Ashuganj moving in the area north of the 311th brigade. The 61st Mountain brigade would attack the area north of Comilla and push towards Daudkandi, while a part of its force contained the Comilla garrison. The objective was to occupy the area up to the Meghna river between Daudkandi and Ashuganj while containing Comilla.
- 23rd Mountain division (redeployed from Himalaya border) was to use the 301st Mountain brigade to occupy Comilla airport, then move along the Comilla – Mudafferganj – Chandpur axis to secure Chandpur. The 181st brigade was to secure Laksham - Chaudhugram area before moving on Noakhali – Chandpur. Kilo force brigade (Mukti Bahini sector no 1, K force brigade and Indian units) was to move from Belonia to Feni then south along the Comilla – Chittagong road towards Chittagong. The 83rd Mountain brigade was kept in reserve to be used as needed.

The main responsibility of the IV core along with Mukti Bahini sector no 2 and 3 were to secure the area between Ashuganj and Chandpur, contain Comilla and then if possible approach Dhaka by crossing the Meghna using helicopters or river ferries – whichever was available.

6

Contribution in Mukthi vahini

M. A. G. Osmani

Muhammad Ataul Gani Osmani (1 September 1918– 16 February 1984), also known as **Bangabir M.A.G. Osmani** was the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) of Bangladesh Forces during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. He equally presided over the significant Bangladesh Sector Commanders Conference 1971 during which the entire Bangladesh Forces were authorized and created. He is popularly referred to as **General Osmani**, with the honorary title of **Bangabir**.

An officer with the British Indian Army since 1939, he served during World War II in Burma. His unit supported all plans of the Allied services as part of the Army Service Corps, rising to the rank of Major by 1942. He opted to join the Pakistan Army after British departed leaving the two new independent nations of India and Pakistan in 1947 as a Lieutenant Colonel. His career was checkered, he had disagreements with his superiors over issues regarding the unprofessional conduct and rules below norms that were practiced during recruitment and treatment of Bengali personnel during both British rule and to an extent also in Pakistan.

Osmani earned a reputation as a highly principled and honest officer, and retired as a Colonel in 1967 as the DDMO in GHQ Pakistan. A legend among Bengali servicemen for his willingness to stand up against higher command for legitimate concerns, his name carried honour and prestige. After retirement, he was welcomed into politics in his area under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman. He later joined the Awami League, and was elected MNA in the 1970 Pakistan general elections from Sylhet. During a meeting at Mujib's residence during late afternoon hours on 25 March 1971, Osmani, also one of many, advised Sheikh Mujib regarding the terrible plight that ensued, and to declare independence of Bangladesh through mass media and move to a secure location.

He was elected as C-in-C of Bangladesh Forces in 1971 by all the Bengali officers, who were the principal participants during the early inception of the independence declaration on March 26, 1971. This was ratified by Bangladesh Government in exile on April 10, 1971. In April 1972, General Osmani, the C-in-C, retired as the first full General (four star) of Bangladesh Forces, which was replaced by Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force. And three separate chiefs were selected on 7 April 1972 along with their Headquarters. Thus 'General M A G Osmani' is the only historical name whose name appears first in the honour boards of the three services as C-in-C between 12 April 1971 to 7 April 1972.

After serving in various government posts during 1972-1975 until his resignation, he was also active in politics during 1977-1984 as the head of Jatiya Janata Party until his death.

EDUCATION

Osmani was born in Sunamganj, Sylhet Division on 1 September 1918. He was a descendant of Shah Nizamuddin Osmani of Dayamir, Balaganj, who came to Sylhet with Hazrat Shah Jalal (R) in 1303. Their immediate family members live in the village of Dayamir. Osmani attended Cotton School in Sylhet but passed matriculation from Sylhet Government Pilot School in 1934 under Calcutta University, securing 1st division marks - which was a rare feat in those times. He secured the "Pritoria Prize" for excellent results in English. Like many Muslim Bengali students of the era, He attended Aligarh Muslim University, India from and graduated in 1938. Osmani then registered for M.A. in Geography (secured second class when he graduated) at the same institution. Osmani had taken UOTC training in Aligarh, raising to the rank of Sergeant, had been elected Vice Chairman of the Assam - Bengal Student Union, and served as a Proctor for two years at the University. The advent of World War II saw Osmani shelf his civilian

career plans for the military. This was probably the only time he went against the wishes of his father.

Military career

In 1939, Osmani started his military career as a Gentleman Cadet during rule under the British Empire in the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun. He was attached to the 4th Urban Infantry from 3 July 1939 to 4 October 1940 while in Dhera Dun. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the British-Indian Army as an artillery officer in 5 October 1940. He was initially attached to the 2nd Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, posted in New Delhi in charge of a depot. After completion of Short Mechanical Transport Course (November 1940 - February 1941) and Junior Tactical Course (February 1941 - April 1941), Lt. Osmani was attached to a Mechanical Transport Battalion, part of the XV Corps (British India) and was posted in Burma during World War II.

British Indian Army 1941 - 1947

Osmani was promoted to the rank of temporary Captain in February 17, 1941 and received a battlefield promotion to temporary Major in 23 May 1942 and at the age of 23, he was the youngest officer to hold that rank in the British Indian Army for some time. Between 1941 and 1945, he successively held the post of Platoon Commander, Battalion Adjutant, Company 2IC and finally Battalion commander of his unit. From November 1944 to February 1945 Major Osmani served as General Staff Officer Grade-2 (GSO-2) in his formation HQ and completed the Senior Officers Course after the War ended.

Major Osmany was attached to British Indian Army HQ Bihar and Orissa Area as DAG-GSO-2 from May 1946 to July 1946 before he was sent to attend the Special Senior Officer's course, passing out in February 1947 and was selected as a candidate for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. His next posting was at Simla and New Delhi in the British Indian Army GHQ in Simla in the Quarter Master General Branch and Ordnance Branch until August 1947 as GSO-2 (General Staff Office, Second Grade). From August to October 6, 1947 as GSO-2 in the HQ of Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck in New Delhi. Osmany had taken the Indian Civil Service examination as per his

father's wishes and passed, but turned down an opportunity for serving in the Indian Foreign service in 1947, opting to stay in the Pakistan Army.

As the British Empire dissolved with the birth of two nations of India and Pakistan in 1947, Osmany witnessed the end of the British Indian army as an active organization. He represented Pakistan during the division of British Indian Army assets between the two emerging countries - India & Pakistan.

Career in the Pakistani Army

After the birth of India and Pakistan in 1947 following the departure of the Lord Mountbatten, Governor General of British India, Osmany joined the newly formed Pakistan Army on 7 October 1947 and was soon promoted to the rank of acting Lieutenant Colonel. Being a career experienced officer and having served in World War II, he was immediately assigned to the General Staff Headquarters as GSO-1, Coordination, Planning and Personnel.

Osmai obtained the rank of temporary Lt. Col. on January 7, 1948 and attended the Long Term Staff Course at the Quetta Staff College. He served alongside (then) Major Yahya Khan, Major Tikka Khan, and Major A. A. K. Niazi, all of whom ironically were destined to lead the Pakistan army against the Bangladesh Forces commanded by Osmany in 1971. After completing his P.S.C. Degree Osmain joined the staff of Maj. General Reginald Hutton (Chief of Staff, Pakistan Army 1947 -51) as GSO-1 in January 1949, and as a Committee Chairman tasked by General Douglas Gracey to evaluate the basic standard for Army enlistment, recommended the establishment of Cadet Colleges in East Pakistan. Osmany later took on the responsibility of Assistant Adjutant General as well.

Joining the Infantry Arm

After serving as a staff officer for eight years, Osmany decided to join the infantry arm of the army. He took a reversion to the rank of Major and after induction training, joined the 5/14 Punjab He was posted as 2IC and Company commander (5th Punjab Battalion of 14th Punjab Regiment), which was then part of a brigade commanded by Brigadier Ayub Khan, in 1950. He became commander of 105th Brigade Training Team in January 1951, and became the OC or 5/14

Punjab in May 1951, after which he did a tour of duty in Kashmir and Waziristan for four months.

Lt. Col. Osmany had a heated argument with the Commander Chief of the Pakistan army, Gen. Ayub Khan, over the treatment of Maj. Gen. Ishfakul Majid, the seniormost Bengali officer in Pakistan Army who had been falsely implicated in the Rawalpindi Conspiracy and forced to resign. This incident may have impacted his career. In August 1951 Osmany left 5/14 Punjab, and was posted as the third CO of 1st East Bengal Regiment (first Bengali to hold this post) in October 1951.

Tour of duty in East Pakistan (1950–1956)

Lt Col Osmany arrived in East Pakistan by sea and joined as CO of 1st East Bengal Regiment, then stationed in Jessore as part of the 107th Brigade, on 8 November 1951. Osmany was a hard taskmaster as CO of 1 EBR, setting up a tough training regime for the battalion, aiming to get the soldiers in top physical shape and the highest level of skill possible. He implemented some fundamental changes that were to have a far-reaching effect on the character of the regiment and on his career path.

He chose Bengali songs as the regimental marching and band songs ("Chal Chal Chal" by Kazi Nazrul Islam, "Gram Chara oi ranga matir path" by Rabindranath Tagore and *Dhano Dhaney Pushpay Bhora* by D.L. Roy), and introduced the *Bratachari* dance (introduced by Guru Shodoy Dutt) as the regimental dance. He also ordered the NCOs to submit the daily situation report in Bangla. These obvious displays of Bengali culture did not sit well with the Punjabi top brass, who were irked by this adoption of what was in their view *Hindu* culture. Osmany characteristically stuck to his guns, and stubbornly carried through the said reforms after the GHQ approved his suggestions. In doing this, he repeatedly clashed with the Punjabi chauvinists, and began gaining reputation as a hard-nosed, stubborn officer with Bengali nationalistic inclinations. In addition, Osmany also served as Commandant of East Bengal Regimental Center in Chittagong from February 1953 to January 1955.

Osmany also commanded the 107th Brigade in Jessore from April 1953 to October 1953, when he received the permanent rank of Major, and rejoined 1 EBR as CO and remained in that post until February

1954. After completion of the GHQ Law course and leaving EBRC, he was temporarily posted as Additional Commandant (Later Deputy Director) of East Pakistan Rifles in March 1955, serving under the Provincial Government of East Bengal. While in the EPR, he played a crucial role in opening up EPR recruitment for non-Bengali minority people (Chakma, Mogh, Tripura peoples, etc.) and stopped the recruitment people from West Pakistan in EPR.

Last post: Staff Officer GHQ Pakistan

Due to Osmany's superior OER (Officer Evaluation Report) the rank of Lieutenant Colonel came sooner than later. From December 1955 to May 1956 as GSO-1 staff officer he worked Senior advisor at CENTO Headquarters in Bagdad as part of the Pakistan Military delegation. Osmany was promoted to Acting Colonel in May 1956 and joined the Pakistan Army GHQ at Rawalpindi in West Pakistan as Deputy Director Military Operations (DDMO). From August 1957 to September 1957 he was the Officiating Director of Military Operations as Acting Brigadier, and until May 1966 he served as the DDMO. He received the permanent rank of Colonel in 1961 and attended Advanced Modern Weapons training in the United States in 1964. Colonel Osmany had served under (then) Brigadier Gul Hassan Khan in 1964, when he was the DDMO and Gul Hassan was the DMO. Although Brigadier Hasan was Osmani's junior, he held the senior post. Hasan had given a good confidential report about Osmany, and felt that Osmany was not given promotion despite having some excellent qualities. Gul Hassan allowed Osmany time to concentrated on issues concerning the Bengal regiments, partly to keep him occupied and partly because the top brass was bypassing Osmany.

By 1958 Osmany held the post of Deputy Director of the general staff and subsequently deputy director of military operations (DDMO) under Major General Yahya Khan and held that post until his retirement eight years later. During the first decade of his career he had reached the rank of Colonel, during the next decade Osmany was not destined to get a single promotion. During his attachment in the General Staff Branch as Deputy Director of Military Operations and Plans, Col. Osmany as additional duty attended the meetings of CENTO SEATO and Air Defense Committee of Pakistan as Pakistan Army advisor.

Bengali soldier recruitment bottleneck

Pakistan was left with 6 infantry divisions and one armored brigade after the division of the British Indian army in 1947, although none of these formations were fully equipped or staffed at that time. The number of Bengali officers and soldiers in the newly formed Pakistan armed forces was small due to the British preference to recruit from so called Martial Races, and because many non Muslim Bengali personnel had opted to join the Indian Army after the British left. Pakistan army had raised only two battalions of East Bengal Regiment during 1947-1950, while a number of Punjab Regiments had been inherited from the British Indian Army. The Azad Kashmir Regiment was created soon after the Indo-Pakistan 1948 war.

When Osmani joined the GHQ in 1956, 3 East Bengal regiments and the East Bengal Regimental Centre (EBRC) had come into existence within the structure of the Pakistan army. During the next 9 years, the number of Punjab Regiments (reorganized in 1956) reached almost 50, the Frontier Force Regiments (created 1957) and Baluch Regiments (created in 1957) were reaching the mid-40s, while the Azad Kashmir regiment was numbering in the 40s. Only 6 East Bengal Regiments had been created during the same time span. The reasons for this situation were:

- Many senior officers of the Pakistan army still believed in the Martial Race theory, and considered Bengalis to be poor soldier material.
- The Bengali recruits were generally of smaller build than the West Pakistanis, and many failed to meet the then established minimum physical requirement of a recruit, which was set on average West Pakistani physical characteristics.
- Many Pakistani officers favored creating mixed regiments instead of purely Bengali ones. Some Pakistani officers felt that increasing the number of exclusive Bengali formations was a threat to the unity of the army.

Pakistani officers not swayed by the above facts were skeptical about the adaptability of Bengali soldiers in West Pakistani environment, where the bulk of Pakistani forces were concentrated according to the Pakistani strategy: *Defence of East Pakistan lies in the West*. The neglect of East Pakistan defence infrastructure was another bone of

contention between Osmani and the Pakistani High command. In 1965 the Pakistani Army had 13 infantry and 2 armoured divisions in service, but only 1 under-strength infantry division was based in East Pakistan. Osmany fought with his seniors on these issues and was sidelined as a result.

Role in the 1965 War

Osmany was sidelined by Pakistani Generals despite being the DDMO during the 1965 war. Having almost nothing to do, he dedicated his time to issues regarding the East Bengal Regiments. He complained that Pakistan Press were suppressing the contributions of his old unit, 1st Bengal, posted at Kasur during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965. Successive COs (both Bengali and non-Bengali) of 1 EBR had built on the foundation Osmany had laid, and the battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. A.T.K. Haque (Bengali), won a total of 17 gallantry awards (including two Sitara-i-Jurat and 9 Tamgha-i-Jurat), the highest number of awards won by any Pakistan Armed Force unit engaged in that conflict. Osmany visited the unit and recommended Nishan-i-Haider for a member, and he was reportedly furious when the battalion CO declined to support his recommendation. However, he arranged reunions for Bengal regiments alumni, and took every opportunity to enhance the reputation of Bengali units in the Pakistan army. His hard core principles, his fierce loyalty and integrity, and determination to improve the standards of all Bengali personnel in the Pakistan army and his willingness to take on anyone who differed with him earned him quite a degree of honor and prestige.

After the 1965 he chaired the committee tasked with determining the required Army reserve and logistical requirement in possible future conflicts, and from the last half of 1965 to April 1966 he was the President of Army Sports Control Board. On 16 May 1966 he went on leave prior to retirement (LPR). Osmany's successor as DDMO was (then) Col. Rao Farman Ali - another person destined for infamy in Bangladesh in 1971. Farman was reportedly horrified upon seeing how Osmani was treated in the Pakistan army. His office was totally run down, Osmani was kept out of the loop and purposefully neglected, even the office help treated him with disdain. Osmany had not been promoted because he was a Bengali and was deemed untrustworthy by the high command.

Retirement and continued influence

Col. Osmani retired from Pakistani Armed Forces on 16 February 1967. Although his efforts had failed to increase the number of Bengal regiments, Pakistani High command, upon the recommendation of Lt. General Khwaja Wasiuddin, had put the existing regiments through a battery of exercises in West Pakistan to test their adaptability and combat readiness. Maj. Gen. Shaikh, evaluator of the exercises, had commented that the Bengali units had performed superbly and the proud Bengali soldiers took in representing East Pakistan was one key component of their success. He recommended against disbanding the units and raising mixed regiments.

Pakistani high command did not increase the number of Bengali units until after 1968, when following a pledge by General Yahya Khan, the number of Bengal regiments were increased to 10 and all new units were ordered to ensure at least 25% Bengali representation among the annual new recruits of the army. Osmani, known as *Papa Tiger* continued to enjoy a positive, revered image among the serving Bengali rank and file in the Pakistan armed forces during his retirement, mainly because of his role in standing up for Bengali soldiers. Although he was not the most senior among Bengali officers (Major General Ishfakul Majid -commissioned after passing out of Sandhurst in 1924 holds this honor) nor did he reach the highest rank in the Pakistani army among Bengalis (Lt. General Khwaja Wasiuddin holds that distinction), Osmani, along with Lt. General Wasiuddin (Colonel Commandant EBR) and Brig. M.H. Mozumdar (Commandant EBRC) were seen as the patron and guide for Bengali troops.

Entry into politics

Col. Osmani was not directly involved in the Agartala Conspiracy Case. The people involved had sought his opinion through (then) Captain Khandker Nazmul Huda (Accused No 27, later Sub Sector Commander in Mutki Bahini in 1971, Colonel in Bangladesh Army in 1975) and Osmani had recommended a political, not armed solution for the discrimination faced by Bengalis in Pakistan. ISI had questioned Osmani in 1958 before the trials began on the issues related to the case. Osmani was neither arrested or implicated although the official charge sheet documented that the accused had contacting him and Osmani had attended a meeting as a "listener".

Awami League Candidate

After his retirement, Osmani entered politics of East Pakistan. He joined the Sheikh Mujib-led Awami League in 1970. As a candidate from Awami League, he contested the election from the Balagaung-Fenchugaung area in Sylhet and he was elected as a member of the national assembly of the country. Osmani was not destined to serve as a MNA in the Pakistan assembly because after the commencement of Bangladesh Liberation War, he became a member of the Bangladesh provisional government-in-exile.

Leadership during Bangladesh Liberation War

Col. (ret.) Osmani and Maj. Gen. (ret.) Majid formed part of the team that advised the Awami League leadership on military issues during 1971. As the political crisis deepened in March, many serving Bengali officers of the Pakistan Armed Forces began looking to Bengali politicians for guidance, and Col. Osmani was selected as the coordinator of these clandestine meetings. Bengali Military officers (both retired and serving), alarmed by the buildup of Pakistani forces apprehensive about their own fates, and maintained contact with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and some contacted Col. Osmany for advice and guidance and to maintain a link with Awami League leaders. Osmany reportedly agreed to coordinate the activities of various Bengali units but toeing the party line, advised all officers against taking any “rash” actions. Brig. M.R. Mazunder (Martial Law Administrator Chittagong area), Lt. Col Rezaul Jalil (CO 1st EBR), Group Captain A.K. Khandker (21C Dacca PAF Base) were all given the same message. Awami League pursued the course of non cooperation, preferring a political solution, and refused to sanction a preemptive strike. Sheikh Mujib had planned to declare full independence only after the Pakistani attack started and Osmany, as a party member, was following the course laid out by the party.

Planned Preemptive Strike

In the days prior to the crackdown student and youth wings of Awami League had set up training camps countrywide and trained volunteers with the aid of Bengali Ansars/Mujahids and student cadets. Talk of “independence” was in full flow, despite the fact that Awami League leadership had refrained from declaring independence on March 7, 1971. Bengali ex-servicemen of Pakistan Armed forces had also

held rallies to declare their support for Awami League. Serving Bengali officers and troops also kept in touch with the politicians, seeking advice and guidance during 1971 when the political situation was becoming uncertain and confrontational. Maj. Gen (retired) Ishfakul Majid and Col (ret.) M.A.G Osmany allegedly designed a military plan of action, which broadly was:

- Capture Dhaka airport and Chittagong seaport to seal off the province.
- EPR and Police to capture Dhaka city aided by Awami League volunteers.
- Cantonments were to be neutralized by Bengali soldiers.

Bengali officers had advised the sabotage of fuel dumps at Narayanganj and Chittagong to ground Pakistani air power and cripple armed force mobility.

Awami League leadership opted to try for the political solution and did not endorse any action or preparation for conflict by Bengali soldiers prior to the start of the crackdown. Warnings by Bengali officers that the Pakistan army was preparing to strike were ignored, junior Bengali officers were told by their seniors not to act rashly and keep out of political issues.

Despite all the political filibustering, public fanfare and alleged preparation for armed struggle, Pakistani army caught the Bengali political leadership and Bengali soldiers flatfooted. The resistance Pakistanis encountered country wide once Operation Searchlight was launched was spontaneous and disorganized, not a preplanned coordinated military response under a central command structure. In most cases Bengali soldiers were unaware of the situation around the country, many units continued to perform routine duties as late as March 31 and rebelled only after they came under Pakistani attack. Some Pakistani generals suggested declaring a general amnesty for Bengali troops upon observing the situation as early as March 31 (it was ignored). Although warned of the departure of Yahia Khan and the movement of Pakistani troops, the declaration of independence by Mujibur Rahman on March 26 was given after the attack had commenced and was largely unnoticed (ironically Pakistanis picked it up). No countrywide communication reached Bengali soldiers to start

the uprising, Bengali troops and officers took the initiative to rebel upon being attacked or hearing the news of the Pakistani attack.

Role in Bangladesh Liberation War

Col. Osmani was present at the house of Sheikh Mujib when Bengali officers informed Awami League leaders of the departure of Yahia Khan and army movement. After failing to persuade Sheikh Mujib to go into hiding, Osmani himself hid in Dhaka until March 29, shaved off his famous mustache (he was often called *the man attached to a mustache*) then made for the Indian border. Osmani first went to Jingira, then to Daudkandi via boat. He was detained by local people in Daudkandi, who were suspicious of him, before the brother of the local member of parliament helped him to get free. He then walked, took boat and crossed the Gomoti with the help of another Bengali officer who was with Army Signal Corps to reach India by 2 April 1971.

Meetings at Teliapara

Col. Osmani arrived at Teliapara, where 2nd and 4th East Bengal Regiments (EBR) had established a temporary base accompanied by Brig. Panday of BSF on April 2, 1971. A meeting of Bengali Officers took place on April 4, which was attended by (then) Lt. Col (ret.) M.A Rab, Maj. K.M. Shafiullah (CO 2 EBR), Maj. Khaled Musharraf (CO - 4 EBR), Ziaur Rahman (CO - 8 EBR), Lt. Col Salahuddin Reza, Major (ret) Qazi Nurujjaman, Major Shafat Jamil and other officers. Chaired by Col. Osmani, The following was discussed:

- Col. Osmani proposed that 2nd and 4th EBR attack and occupy Comilla, and asked Major Jaman to formulate a fireplan. This was opposed by other officers on the ground that the battalions would probably suffer crippling losses, and was ultimately dropped.
- Major Zia proposed that all available forces should be assembled around Chittagong to hold the area as long as possible. This was also discussed and dropped as this was not a practical suggestion.
- At the suggestion of Brig. Panday, the commanders agreed to send 2 companies (one from 2 EBR and one from 4 EBR) to help the battered 8th EBR under Ziaur Rahman.

Col Osmani designated 4 Sector Commanders: Maj. Ziaur Rahman (Chittagong area), Maj. Khaled Musharraf (Comilla), Maj. K M Shafiullah (Sylhet) and Maj. Abu Osman Chowdhury (Kushtia-Jessore).. He also appointed Lt. Col. Salahuddin Reza as the Sector Commander for Mymensingh Area, and on April 7 instructed Major Q.N. Jaman to oversee operations in Sylhet. The officers agreed a government in exile should be formed from political leaders and the Bengali forces should be placed under its authority. Col Osmani visited Mukti Bahini positions in Sylhet, on April 9 he visited Captain Aziz with 2 EBR Charlie Company near Sylhet. On the same day another conference took place, this time attended by Brig. Panday and Director General Rustomji of BSF, in addition to Bengali officers. The issues discussed included:

- Col. Osmani was elected as the commander of Bengali forces.
- Agreement was reached with India officers on logistical assistance for Bengali forces
- The need to form a Government in exile was agreed on, as was the fact that this should be formed by the political leadership. This was crucial for international reorganization and would prevent coining the struggle as a military revolt. The conference abruptly broke up when Col. Osmani left after hearing that 5 PAF jets were inbound. The following day 3 more sector commanders were chosen: Maj. Nazmul Huq (Rajshahi-Pabna), Captain Nawajish (Rangpur-Dinajpur) and Captain Jalil (Barisal). Pakistan Army appointed Lt. Gen. A.A.K Niazi GOC East Pakistan on the same day. On April 12, Bengali Government in Exile at Agartola formally appointed Col. Osmani Commander of Bangladesh Forces. With the formation of Bangladesh government on 17 April 1971, retired Colonel Osmani was reinstated to active duty under the authority of Bangladesh government and appointed as Commander-in-Chief of all Bangladesh Forces.

Initial Activities as the Commander-in-Chief

General Osmani did not assume personal command of the Bangladesh Forces until after April 17, 1971. The existing Bengali fighting formations were located far away from each other, and lacking a proper command staff and more importantly a fully integrated communication network, exercising real-time command over the

widely spread formations was impossible. Osmani instead chose to allow the designated sector commanders to fight on as they saw fit, while he toured the designated sectors, and met with Indian officials in New Delhi and Kolkata. He conferred Tajiuddin and along with spoke to Indian authorities on two points only. The two principle points were weapons and communications. Supplying weapons, ammunition and adequate communications gear was and remains the most expensive trade in any military. To the poorly equipped Indian army in 1971, such a notion was hardly affordable. The Indian officials with its meager resources had to deny any requests for weapons or communications. Furthermore communication supplies resulting in unaccounted for status would result in a serious problem. Indian army planners had very little idea or training on tough terrains of Bangladesh, which was just devastated by a severe cyclone. General Osmani along with most of his senior command staff was very knowledgeable and well trained obviously having served in East Pakistan. The Indian army inquired about Osmani's plans, understood the outlined the situation in Bangladesh, had assisted to organize the Bangladesh Forces structure and sounded out the possibility of open Indian intervention the ripe moment.

The Bengali resistance had put up an unexpected stiff resistance and had managed to derail the initial Pakistani estimate of pacifying East Pakistan by April 10. However, the initial successes were not sustainable as the Bengali forces began to suffer from lack of trained men, officers, coordination among scattered troops and the lack of central command structure, proper supplies (despite limited aid from BSF), although majority of the country was still outside Pakistani control. Pakistani army had airlifted the 9th and 16th infantry division to Bangladesh by April 10 and was poised to seize the initiative. Gen. Niazi, obtaining a brief from Gen. Raza (the departing GOC East Pakistan), implemented the following strategy:

- Clear all the big cities of insurgents and secure Chittagong.
- Take control and open all river, highway and rail communication network.
- Drive the insurgents away from the interior of the country
- Launch combing operations across Bangladesh to wipe out the insurgent network.

Against this strategy Bengali field commanders opted to go with *holding as much area for as long as possible*. The Bengali political leadership hoped to keep the Pakistanis confined into the cities, while the government in exile sought diplomatic recognition and the resistance prepared for guerrilla warfare and awaited the expected of Indian military intervention. Lacking everything except unskilled volunteers, Mukti Bahini fought a conventional battle against an enemy enjoying superiority in number of trained men, firepower, and complete air superiority and played to the strength of Pakistanis. Choosing to attack Bengali forces all over Bangladesh simultaneously, Gen. Niazi concentrated battalion and brigade size forces on company and battalion size defense positions repeatedly, used air strikes and artillery barrages disregarding civilian safety, employed Heli-borne troops to outflank positions and hammered through to reach chosen objectives. Pakistani troop convoys were repeatedly ambushed, but these only delayed the Pakistani advance temporarily. By Mid May, Pakistani forces had regained control of most of the province, and by mid June, the battered remnants of the Bengali forces had been driven across the border into India.

Indian involvement

The main reason Generals Farman and Yakub had opposed any military action against civilians in East Pakistan was the fear of an Indian attack, which the Pakistan army was woefully unprepared to meet in March 1971. After the crackdown, Tajuddin Ahmed met with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on April 3, 1971 and asked for all possible aid, by which time the Indian government had already opened East Pakistan border and the BSF was offering limited aid to the Bengali resistance. The issue of direct military intervention was discussed between the Indian military and political leadership in April 1971. The case for intervention was based on the following:

- Until April 10, most of Bangladesh was outside Pakistani control, and the troops were bottled up in a few cities and was facing fierce resistance. It is likely the Indian army, with proper air support, could have quickly taken control of most of the province by aiding the Mukti Bahini.
- Indian Eastern Naval contingent (1 aircraft carrier and several warships) could have imposed a blockade of the province and

cut off supplies from the sea, as the Pakistan Naval arm in the east only contained 1 destroyer and 4 gunboats.

- Pakistani forces were flying in crucial reinforcements from West Pakistan during March 26 – May 2 and were dependent of the supply depots located in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Narayanganj for fuel and ammunitions. Most Pakistani garrisons were cut off from each other and reliant on supplies through airlifts. The Indian Air Force, vastly outnumbering the Pakistan Air Force Eastern contingent, could have cutoff the air-links and destroyed the supply depots (as it did in December 1971).

Against this, the military leadership had to consider the following:

- Indian army a suitable force available for action in April 1971, and had to assemble one from forces deployed in other areas for such an operation. Could an adequate force be put in place without jeopardizing the security of the northern and western borders of India in time to make a difference in East Pakistan?
- Could a logistical network be established around East Pakistan to support the combat force before Pakistani army took over the province?
- Should the Indians fail to gain a quick victory, was the army and the government ready (logistically and otherwise) for a long war, especially during the monsoon season in Bangladesh?
- Intervening in East Pakistan would make India the aggressor in International circles. Was India ready to diplomatically meet the international reaction and had India ensured the cooperation of a superpower as a diplomatic ally and arms supplier, crucial for running a long war?

Although some of the Bengali leadership hoped for and expected an Indian military operation at the earliest, a view also shared by some Indian officers, Indian army eastern command decided in the present condition such a move was unadvisable, and a full attack could only take place after November 15 at the earliest, after deliberate and extensive preparations, which was further elaborated to the Indian cabinet by Gen. Sam Manekshaw. Indian leadership decided not to directly "intervene", but chose to get "involved": Eastern command took over responsibility for East Pakistan operations on April 29, and on May 15 launched Operation Jackpot, a full fledged operation to

arm, train, equip, supply and advice the Mukti Bahini fighters engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Pakistan armed forces. As an Indian diplomat commented to General Osmani, expecting direct Indian armed intervention in April was not practical.

Rebuilding the Bangladesh Force (BDF)

During the period of April–June, General Osmani was busy with touring the various areas in an effort to boost morale and gather information, meeting with his Indian counterparts and setting up the Bangladesh forces command structure. The Indian army had taken over supplying the Mukti Bahini since May 15 and launched Operation Jackpot to equip, train, supply and advise Mukti Bahini. By mid June, Bengali fighters had been driven into India and was in the process of setting up infrastructure to run a sustained, coordinated guerrilla campaign. Bengali high command had begun to rebuilt and redeploy Mukti Bahini units since mid May, and now began to tackle the task in earnest. During June–July, Mukti Bahini activity slacked off and the quality and effect of the insurgency was timid and poor.

The task of planning and running the war was enormous, much more so because of the acute shortage of trained officers in the surviving Bengali forces. Of the 17,000 active duty Bengali soldiers (Army and EPR) who faced the Pakistani onslaught on March 25, 1971, about 4000 became prisoners, and casualties had reduced the number of available trained personnel even further. Retired servicemen and new trainees had boosted that ranks somewhat, but further training and recruiting was needed to achieve the maximum possible results. Having lost the initial conventional war, but having secured Indian support and set up an infrastructure to run the war, the next step for the Mukti Bahini commanders was to come up with a comprehensive strategy with clearly defined roles and goals - something that also involved creating a substantial guerrilla force from scratch.

The July 10–15 sector commanders conference was to provide much needed guidance in this regard. The conference was chaired by Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed and coordinated by Gen. Osmani, and took place at 8, Theater Road, HQ of the Bangladesh Government in exile.

Resignation

Col. Osmani was not present during the first day of the conference - he had resigned as CIC Bangladesh forces the previous day. A group of Bengali officers had discussed an idea about creating a *War Council*, with Maj. Ziaur Rahman as its head and all the sector commanders as members to run the war effort - Osmani was to be the *Defence Minister*. Presented by Major Q.N. Zaman and supported by Maj. Ziaur Rahman during a discussion session of all sector commanders, the officers feared that given the distance between sector headquarters and Kolkata and the poor state of communication, it might be better to have a separate operational wing to run the war effort to lessen the burden on Osmani. The facts were later probably misrepresented to Col. Osmani, who resigned as this proposal was not complementary to his leadership abilities or to his post as CIC. The following day Osmani resumed his post as CIC after all sector commanders requested him to resume his post. The meeting went on without a glitch and decisions on strategy and organization was taken - all of which were vital for the War. The major decisions were:

- Designating the operational area, strength, command structure and role of the Mukti Bahini. General Osmani was to remain C-in-C, with Lt. Col. MA Rab (posted at Agartola with no combat duties) as the Chief of Staff (COS), Group Captain A.K Khandker was made the Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS). Bangladesh was divided into 11 combat sectors, and individual sector commanders were selected or reconfirmed for each sector. Out of the 11 proposed sectors, 8 became organized and active by July, with sectors no 5 and 11 becoming active in August. Sector no 10 (encompassing all areas east of Teknaf and Khagrachari) was never activated, and the proposed area of operation for this sector was incorporated in sector no 1. Later the naval commando unit activities were designated as 'Sector 10' and commanded by Osmani himself. Indian Army posted Brig. Ujjal Gupta with a small staff to assist Bangladesh Forces HQ.
- Mukti Bahini personnel were divided into 2 broad subdivisions: *Regular Forces*, and *Freedom Fighters*.

Regular Forces: This contained the defecting Bengali soldiers and retired members of the Pakistan army and EPR troops. Organised

into battalions, these later became known as *Z Force*, *K Force* and *S Force* brigades. Lack of trained regular troops meant majority of recruits were either ex EPR servicemen or newly trained recruits. Those trained men from regular army, EPR, police, Ansar/ Mujahids not included in the regular formations were formed into *sector troops* - which were more lightly armed but operated as conventional force units. Army officers were in command of these detachments. Sector troops were not armed like the regular battalions, but received monthly salaries like their comrades. The regular force personnel initially operated in the border areas.

Freedom Fighters: Also known as *Gonobahini*, the newly trained guerrillas were part of this organization. They were lightly armed, received no monthly pay and were deployed mostly inside Bangladesh upon completion of training.

- Political and civil organization for each sector as well as war objectives were also discussed and decided upon. Use of Guerrillas to hit the Pakistani armed forces, their collaborators, economic and logistical infrastructure was given priority.

Strategy for the Campaign

General Osmani decided on the strategy for Bangladesh forces to follow and liaised with the Indian brass to keep them apprised of such decisions during July - December 1971, but he was not destined to organize an operation like the Tet Offensive or lead in a battle similar to Dien Bien Phu during his stint as C-in-C of Bangladesh forces. His leadership and strategy was a product of his professional career and the demands of the situation on the ground, which also influenced his leadership style to a large extent. He relied on his background of active participation in the South-East Asian sector during the Second World War. From May 15 the Indian army began to help build the liberation force. Major-General Sarker of the Indian Army was appointed as the Liaison Officer between Bangladesh Government-in-exile and the Indian Army. In the meantime Major Safiullah, Major Khaled Musharraf and Colonel Osmani met at Teliapara, a place in Sylhet district and prepared a basic paper on the strategy of the liberation war. His differences with the Indian brass was to start with the selection of his initial battle strategy. Bangladesh government had hoped to raise a regular force of 30,000

soldiers and 100,000 guerrillas during 1971 “ something which the Indians thought unrealistic. There were also issues concerning the training, deployment and objectives of these forces where opinions between Bangladeshi and Indian leadership differed.

The initial Strategy (July - September 1971)

General Osmani was a conventional soldier with orthodox views and his initial strategy reflects his background. The uncertainty over the timing, scope and scale of direct Indian military intervention was another factor that influenced his decision. Osmani decided to raise a conventional force of regular battalions and use them to free an area around Sylhet, while organizing countrywide guerrilla activity as the secondary effort. Bangladesh government in exile requested Osmani to make use of the one resource available in abundance: manpower, and he did not object to the plan of sending thousands of guerrillas into Bangladesh with minimal training. It was hoped that some of the guerrillas would attain the level of expertise needed through experience.

Two ways to skin a cat

The Indian planners were concerned with the quality and effectiveness of a force raised in haste. They were concerned that such a force would lack the trained junior leaders needed to run an effective campaign. They had envisioned a force of perhaps 8,000 personnel with at least 3/4 months training (leaders receiving longer training), led by the surviving officer/men of the EBR/EPR to commence operations in small cells inside Bangladesh by August 1971. The raising of additional battalions only drained away potential leadership candidates away from the guerrilla forces -undesirable for the Indian outlook.

General Osmani was stubbornly insistent, and his stubbornness did not sit well with the Indians - who thought deputy chief of staff A.K Khandkar was easier to work with. However, Indians provided support in raising 3 additional battalions and 3 artillery batteries, but also insisted that the raising guerrillas be given due attention, to which Osmani raised no objection. Indians and Osmani differed on the location of the *Free area* - Indians suggested Mymensingh, but Osmani opted for Sylhet. General Osmani got his way again. Thus while the EBR battalions made ready, Mukti Bahini began sending 2,000 - 5,000

guerrillas inside Bangladesh each month from July onwards. Mukti Bahini commanders had agreed to the following objectives for the guerrillas during the sector commanders meeting:

- Increase Pakistani casualties through raids and ambushed by sending the maximum possible number of guerrillas in the minimum possible time inside Bangladesh.
- Cripple economic activity by destroying power stations, railway lines, storage depots and communication systems.
- Destroy Pakistani force mobility by blowing up bridges/culverts, fuel depots, trains and river crafts.
- The objective is to make the Pakistanis to spread their forces inside the province, so attacks can be made on isolated Pakistani detachments.

General Osmani, however, supported the Indian initiative for training Naval commandos, who were an *elite* unit trained as per the Indian doctrine, and achieved spectacular results during 1971, demonstrating that he was pragmatic enough to accept Indian suggestions. He took exception to the creation of Bangladesh Liberation Force, a stance supported by sector commanders and the Bangladesh government in exile.

Action and Reaction: June - September 1971

Pakistan army, after expelling the Mukti Bahini from Bangladesh by May 1971, enjoyed a relatively peaceful time between June and July 1971. Mukti Bahini activities had slacked off during the months of preparation, and although the Indian army had begun shelling border outposts (about 50% of the existing 370 were destroyed by the end of July) to ensure easier infiltration into occupied territories. Bengali regular forces were not ready for operation until mid July. With the conflict largely polarized around the India-East Pakistan border region, Pakistan Eastern command began reorganizing their forces to consolidate their control of the province. The following strategic and tactical steps were taken:

- Pakistan Army deployed the 9th Division (CO Maj. Gen. Shaukat Riza, HQ Jessore, containing the 57th and 107th brigades, which were part of the 14th division prior to March 25) to operate in the area south of the Padma and West of the Meghna Rivers. The

16th Division (CO Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, containing the 23rd (formally of the 14th division), 34th and 205th brigades) was responsible for the area north of the Padma and west the Jamuna rivers. The 14th Division (CO: Maj. Gen. Rahim. Khan, HQ: Dacca, containing the 27th, 303rd and 117th brigades, formally of the 9th division, and the 53rd brigade) looked after the rest of the province.

- The E.P.C.A.F (East Pakistan Civil Armed Force – 23,000 troops with 17 operational wings) was raised from West Pakistani and Bihari volunteers. Razakars (50,000), Al-Badr and Al Shams (5,000 members from each unit) were organized from collaborating Bengali people. Many of the imprisoned EPR and Army troops were screened and absorbed into the Razakar organization.
- Shanti Committees were formed rally public support and provide leadership to Bengalis collaborating with the Pakistani authorities. The police force was reorganized, 5000 police was flown in from West Pakistan and several civilian bureaucrats were posted to run the civil administration.

This vast organization was employed to control the province with an iron fist. Pakistani authorities decided to continue the terror campaign, and rejected all call for political compromise and general amnesty, and did nothing to assuage the feeling of the Bengali population suffering under the army occupation. Strategically, the army deployed in all the sensitive towns, while the other para military units were deployed around the country. The EPCAF took over the duties of the defunct EPR – border and internal security. Pakistani forces occupied 90 Border Out Posts (BOPs) that were deemed crucial, out of 390, half of which had been destroyed by Indian shellfire by July end. Often ad hoc units were created by mixing EPCAF and Razakars around a skeleton army formation for deployment in forward areas. Pakistan army probably enjoyed their most peaceful period during the occupation of Bangladesh in 1971 between Late May and mid July, when Mukti Bahini was reorganizing and the Indian army was implementing Operation Jackpot in their support. From their bases the army conducted sweep and clearing operations in the neighboring areas to root out insurgents and their supporters. In absence of a fully fledged logistical system, the troops were ordered to live off the land – abuse of which led to widespread looting and arson. With the

insurgency in its infancy – Pakistani army was most active during April - June 1971.

The Monsoon Offensive

Mukti Bahini commanders had agreed to the following objectives during the sector commanders meeting :

- Increase Pakistani casualties through raids and ambushed by sending the maximum possible number of guerrillas in the minimum possible time inside Bangladesh.
- Cripple economic activity by hitting power stations, railway lines, storage depots and communication systems.
- Destroy Pakistani mobility by blowing up bridges/culverts, fuel depots, trains and river crafts.
- The objective is to make the Pakistanis to spread their forces inside the province, so attacks can be made on isolated Pakistani detachments.

As Bengali guerrillas began to increase their numbers and activities inside Bangladesh from June onwards, sending 2000 – 5000 guerrillas across the border and began to become more active in the border areas, Pakistani army also began to adapt to the situation. Razakars and EPCAF were employed to deal with the internal security matters. Pakistan forces, unable to match the Indians shell for shell, declined to take up the challenge, relying on sudden barrages at selected areas. Choosing not to defend all the border outposts, Pakistani forces occupied and fortified 90 strategically located BOPs, while over half of 390 BOPs were eventually destroyed by Indian shellfire by July end to make Mukti Bahini infiltration easier. Pakistanis also build up an intelligence networks to collect information on Mukti Bahini activity and sent informers across the border to give early warning of Mukti Bahini activity. Denied permission to launch cross border preemptive strikes, ambushes were laid for Mukti Bahini infiltrators and artillery was used to interdict movement whenever possible. Time consuming efforts were made to defuse mines, a favorite Mukti Bahini weapon. The Mukti Bahini activity was viewed as timid and the main achievements were blowing up of culverts, mining abandoned railway tracks, and harassment of Pakistani collaborators. Bengali regular forces had attacked BOPs in Mymensingh Comilla and Sylhet, but the results were mixed. Pakistani authorities concluded that they had

successfully contained the Monsoon Offensive, and they were not far from the truth.

Silver Linings among dark clouds

The sector commanders reviewed the results of the Mukti Bahini activities during June – August 1971, and General Osmani also conducted an overall assessment in September 1971. The findings were not encouraging; Mukti Bahini had failed to meet the expectations. The reasons for this were numerous and had to be properly handled to get the war effort on course. The main reasons identified were:

- The guerrilla network was being built and had not taken firm root in Bangladesh. Guerrillas, with only 3/4 weeks of training, lacked the experience and numbers to compensate their lack of skills. In many cases, they drifted back towards the border after a few days of operations or when under pressure from Pakistani forces.
- Razakar and Shanti Committees were effective in countering the Mukti Bahini activity. About 22,000 better armed Razakars had become such a threat that in some areas Mukti Bahini ceased operating, and in other areas they were forced to operate against the Razakars, which suited the Pakistanis as it kept their forces from harm.
- Uncertainty over re-supply and maintenance had caused many of the Guerrillas cautious, they were unwilling to use up their scanty ammunition, which also hampered operations.
- Until the "Crack Platoon" members hit targets in Dhaka and the naval commandos simultaneously mined ships in Chittagong, Chandpur, Narayanganj and Mongla on August 15, the slow pace of operations inside Bangladesh was demoralizing for all involved – the Bangladesh issue was losing ground in the international arena
- Bengali regular troops had attacked the BoPs with spirit, but more training, better communication and coordination with Indian army support elements were needed for launching a successful conventional campaign. The attack on Kamalpur by 1st EBR was a bloody repulse, 3rd EBR attack on Bahadurabad was a success. Likewise, attacks by 2nd, 11th and 4th EBR yielded mixed results that only confirmed the conclusion.

- Coordination between Indian forces and Bangladesh forces were poor, there were several incident of misunderstanding and the supply situation needed major improvement. In some areas relationship between Bengali and Indian commanders had degraded to the point of finger pointing and in many cases conflicting messages had come to Indian and Bengali formations regarding the same operation. These issues had further eroded the combat capacity of the Bengali forces on the ground during June - August 1971.

THE ONE TWO PUNCH

Issues regarding *Mujib Bahini*

General Osmani was Commander in Chief of all Bangladesh forces, but a number of units were outside the control of Bangladesh forces HQ. Bengali fighters had raised several bands to fight the Pakistani opposition in various areas of Bangladesh (Kaderia Bahini, led by *Tiger Siquiqi* of Tangail is the most famous), and these operated independently of Bangladesh HQ. Osmani spared little thought on them, but the so call Mujib Bahini became a major cause of concern for the Bangladesh government in exile establishment. The Leaders of the Mujib Bahini were initially given permission by General Osmani to recruit student and youth volunteers for the war, but in fact had become leaders of a fully organized, well-armed and -trained force, who allegiance was firstly to Sheikh Mujib and then to their own commanders, not to the Bangladesh government in exile.

No one doubted the skill of the Mujib Bahini or commitment of its members to Bangladesh or their patriotism. Trained by General Uban, an insurgency expert, this force operated under the direction of R&AW outside the Bangladesh forces chain of command and the knowledge of Bangladesh government. Mujib Bahini members were better trained and better armed than their Mukti Bahini counterparts. Bangladeshi government and military leadership were concerned because:

- Most of recruits of Mujib Bahini had been identified as potential future guerrilla leaders of Mukti Bahini, who had suddenly disappeared from the camps - which was first noticed by Mukti Bahini command in June 1971. Their recruitment into a separate force meant the loss of leadership potential for the Mukti Bahini.

- Operating outside the command structure and knowledge of Bangladesh leadership, their activities, successful or otherwise, often hindered Mukti Bahini operations. They would often strike in areas without Mukti Bahini knowledge, bringing in unexpected Pakistani retaliation and unhinging Mukti Bahini plans for the area.
- Some of the activities of Mujib Bahini was creating misunderstanding and distrust in the field. Some of their members had tried to influence Mukti Bahini members to switch their allegiance, in cases had tried to disarm the guerrillas and some clashes had taken place between Mukti Bahini and Mujib Bahini members, and in some areas Mukti Bahini sector commanders arrested known Mujib bahini members. The Indian Army and other organizations involved in supporting the Bengali resistance were also dissatisfied with the activities of this independent organization which was operating outside the existing chain of command.

Bangladesh Government in exile took various diplomatic initiatives, including approaching RAW director Ramnath Kao to bring this organization under the control of the government or under General Osmani without success. By August it was clear the independent activities of Mujib Bahini was detrimental for the war effort and Gen Osmani threatened to resign unless they were brought within the command structure of Bangladesh forces. A meeting with D.P Dhar on August 29 produced an assurance that Mujib Bahini would inform of their activities beforehand to the sector commander prior to commencing their operations. Another meeting with Ramnath Kao on September 18 produced nothing about R&AW relinquishing their control over Mujib Bahini.

On October 21, Bangladesh Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed met with Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and she ordered D.P Dhar to solve the issue, who in turn informed Lt. Gen. B.N. Sarkar to meet with Mujib Bahini leaders and take necessary steps. Mujib Bahini leaders failed to show up, but sensing which way the wind was blowing, stopped their disruptive activities. Mujib Bahini, along with the Special Frontier Force under the command of Maj. Gen. Uban, went on to liberate Rangamati in December and helped the Indians dismantled the Mizo insurgent network.

Absence in the December 16 Surrender Ceremony

There have been several controversy theories regarding Col. Osmani not being in Dhaka in December 16, 1971. The most verified information remains Osmani's helicopter which was supposed to carry him to Dhaka from Sylhet was damaged in midair by gun fire & it crash landed in an open field despite being cleared of any Pakistani artillery not in existence on the pathway. Controversial absence of Colonel Osmani from the victory ceremony After the crash, where Col. Osmani & his crew have been wounded, were rescued immediately by an Indian surveillance jeep, but remained out of touch with Indian and Bangladesh HQ and could not reach Dhaka in time. Regardless of such suspicious situation both Bangladesh & Indian Government stayed blind eyed & sought no further inquiry on the incident. Whereabouts of the C-in-C on 16 Dec. 1971 Osmani was elevated to the rank of General of the Bangladesh Armed Forces with effect from the date 16 December 1971.

Liberation War Medals

Bangladesh Government decided to issue four types of medal of valor namely Bir Shereshto, Bir Uttam, Bir Bikram and Bir Pratik for freedom fighters. The list of awardees were selected by several sector commanders and General Osmani at the beginning of 1972. When the list was published, it came under criticism and was initially cancelled before being officially formalized. General Osmani had been criticized for alleged bias for supporting the list.

General of Bangladesh Army

After the Bangladesh Liberation War ended with the surrender of Pakistan Armed Forces to the joint command of India and Bangladesh on December 16, 1971, Col. Osmani arrived in Dhaka on December 22 and set up his HQ probably in the "LOG Area HQ Building" in Dhaka cantonment. On January 9, 1972, Gen. Osmani ordered the arrangement of the Bangladesh Armed Forces Honor Guard that received Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his return on January 10, 1972 at Tezgaon Airport. Bangladesh Government promoted him to Four Star General (the first ever in Bangladesh history) effective from December 16, 1971 on April 7, 1972, after January 10, 1972 to honor his contribution during the liberation war. General Osmani continued

to be the commander in chief of Bangladesh forces, which was equivalent to the post of a civilian cabinet minister.

Sector Commander Conference January 2-11, 1972

Col. Osmani and Senior Sector Commanders of Mukti Bahini held a conference in Dhaka from January 2 to January 11, 1972 to discuss the future of Bangladesh Armed Forces among other issues. Lt. Col. Abu Taher (Commander Sector 11 -wounded) and Major Jalil (Commander Sector 9 - Closed) were not present in the meeting. In line with the Six Point Programme and Bangladesh Government Cabinet decision to form a National Militia, the conference set up a committee to oversee the formation of this organization. This Militia was to be formed with members of Mukti Bahini and the members of the former East Pakistan Rifles. Major A.N.M Nuruzzaman (Commander Sector 3) was selected to command the militia.

Bangladesh Armed Forces were also reorganized, personnel from Army, Navy, Air Force and Police were ordered to join their respective organizations and Ex- EPR members joined the newly formed National Militia. Regular Bangladesh Army and Mukti Bahini formations initially were positioned at: Mukti Bahini Sector 1 and K Force in Chittagong, Mukti Bahini Sectors 2 and 3 in Comilla, Z Force, Sectors 4 and 5 in Sylhet, Sector 6 in Dinajpur and Sector 7 in Rangpur, Sector 8 and 9 in Jessore and Sector 11 and S force in Dhaka.

Disturbance at Pilkhana

On February 16, 1972 tension between Mukti Bahini members and former EPR members who had not been able to join the Liberation War, erupted in a shooting episode at Pilkhana. Gen Osmani was informed of the incident and arrived at Pilkhana, but was unable to enter due to the ongoing shooting. The firing stopped once President Mujibur Rahman arrived on the scene. General Osmani and Bangabandhu then defused the situation. It was decided to keep the EPR intact as Bangladesh Rifles and create another force called Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini with the Mukti Bahini members. In April 1972 Bangladesh Government decided to abolish the post of Commander in Chief and create the post of Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Air Staff and Chief of Naval Staff to separate the command structure of the three services.



RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY
LIBRARY FOUNDATION

उपहार स्वरूप

Gifted by

राजा राममोहन राय पुस्तकालय प्रतिष्ठान

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY
LIBRARY FOUNDATION

BLOCK DD-34 SECTOR-1 SALT LAKE
KOLKATA - 700 064



The events of the nine-month conflict of the Bangladesh Liberation War are widely viewed as genocide; the Pakistan Army and collaborators targeted Hindu communities, intellectuals and members of the political opposition for attacks. Historians have estimated that, during the conflict, between two hundred thousand and four hundred thousand women and children were raped leading to an estimated 25,000 war babies being born. Estimates of persons killed during the conflict range from between 269,000 to one to three million. An estimated ten million refugees entered India, a situation which contributed to its government's decision to intervene militarily in the civil war. Thirty million people were displaced. Susan Brownmiller documented that girls from the age of eight to grandmothers of seventy-five suffered rapes during the war.



